

# The St Michael Steiner School NEWSLETTER



9th December 2011  
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## The Christmas Tree

### Dates for Your Diary

#### DECEMBER

Thu 15: 11 to 12.30pm End of Term Festival (TBC) (No Afternoon Care) School ends at 12:30pm

Fri 16: 8.15/8.30am Kindergarten Family Festival

Fri 16 : 12.30pm END OF TERM FOR ALL CLASSES

#### JANUARY

Mon 9: 10am to 4pm STAFF INSET (no school)

Tue 10: 8.15am TERM STARTS

Thu 19: 7 to 8.30pm Kindergarten Parents Evening

Fri 20: 9:15 to 11:45am Simplicity Parenting Workshop Course 2

Fri 20: 1:30 to 3:30pm A Gentle Beginning (Parent and Infant Support group)

Tue 24: 7 to 8.30pm Class 3&4 Parents Evening

Sat 28: 10am to 12.30pm Open Day

Tue 31: 7 to 9.30pm Class 5&6 and 7&8 Parents Evening

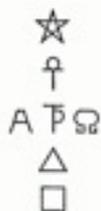
#### FEBRUARY

Thu 2 : 7 to 8:30pm Growing Down and Waking Up: A course for parents in child development: Part III

Sat 4: 9.30am to 12.30pm A Day in the Classroom (a workshop with teachers for parents)

Wed 8: 7 to 8.30pm Class 1 and Class 2 Parents Evening

Thu 9: 12.30/3pm SCHOOL END FOR HALF-TERM



Every morning during Advent, we gather around the Christmas tree to light the candles, (their light growing stronger each day), to hear readings, first from the Old Testament, then from St Luke's gospel and finally from St John, and to sing carols.

Those of you who have joined us may have noticed and wondered about the symbols on the tree. These are ancient symbols that have a special meaning for people in various parts of the world. They are brought together in a special form on the tree: At the bottom is the square, a symbol of the fourfold nature of man: the part of us that we have in common with the mineral world, the plant world and the animal world, and that which makes us uniquely human: the ego. Above it is the triangle, the symbol for higher human faculties still to be developed. Above the triangle is the Tarok, flanked by Alpha and Omega. The Tarok comes from the Egyptian Mysteries and symbolises the whole history of mankind; Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end of time. Above this symbol is the Tao - a reminder of the most ancient scenes of human civilisation in Asia and Africa. Around these symbols of earthly life are the ancient symbols for the seven planets, after which the days of the week are named: Sun, Moon, Mars, Mercury, Jupiter, Venus and Saturn.

From *Signs and Symbols of the Christmas Tree* (Rudolf Steiner):

*Finally, the cosmic symbol of Man is the pentagram, hanging at the top of the tree. It is the star of evolving humanity; it symbolises the very essence and meaning of earth-existence. It comes to birth in the Holy Night because the greatest Light shines forth from the deepest Darkness.*

*The symbols of Christianity are reflections of the most ancient symbols used by man. The lighted Christmas Tree is one of them. For us it is a symbol of the Tree of Paradise, representing all-embracing material nature. Spiritual Nature is represented by the Tree of Knowledge and the Tree of Life.*

*There is a legend which gives expression to the true meaning of the Tree of Knowledge and the Tree of Life. Seth stands before the Gate of Paradise, craving entry. The Cherubim guarding the entrance with a fiery sword, allow him to pass. In Paradise, Seth finds the Tree of Life and the Tree of Knowledge firmly intertwined. The Archangel Michael who stands in the presence of God, allows him to take three grains of seed from this intertwined Tree. The Tree stands there as a prophetic indication of the future of mankind. When the whole of mankind has attained Initiation and found knowledge, then only the Tree of Life will remain, there will be no more death. But in the meantime only he who is an Initiate may take from this Tree the three grains of seed - the three seeds which symbolise the three higher members of man's being. When Adam died, Seth placed these three grains of seed in his mouth and out of them grew a flaming bush. From the wood cut from this bush, new sprouts, new leaves burst ever and again. But within the flaming ring around the bush there was written: "I am He who was, who is, who is to be" - in other words, that which passes through all incarnations, the power of ever-evolving man who descends out of the light into the darkness and out of the darkness ascends into the light.*

*The staff with which Moses performed his miracles is cut from the wood of the bush; the door of Solomon's Temple is made of it; the wood is carried to the waters of the pool of Bethesda and from it the pool receives the healing properties of which we are told. And from this same wood the Cross of Christ Jesus is made, the wood of the Cross which is a symbol of life that passes into death and yet has within it the power to bring forth new life. The great symbol of worlds stands before us here: Life the conqueror of Death. The wood of this Cross has grown out of the three grains of seed of the Tree of Paradise.*

You are warmly invited to join us for the last week of this celebration. It takes place in the reception area from 8:30 to 8:45am every day. Please arrive in good time so that the mood is not spoiled by squeaking doors and buzzers.

## From The Early Years

The Advent Spiral festival in its original form, dates back to 1926 Switzerland. Our Kindergarden families joined in two groups on Monday 28<sup>th</sup> of November to take part in this festival.

"However it is done, this simple act of receiving a candle, carrying it alone on a journey to the source of light, kindling it and placing it on the earth, is able to leave a deep impression on the hearts and minds of adults and children alike"\*1

Here are reflections from some of the parents and Early Years team which arose in the days after this years festival.

"I read all the information that was sent out and sang through the songs so I could really be part of it. When the time came it was a magical experience walking towards the light"

"I was proud when my child walked alone."

"The spiral was very gently relevant which was right for the children"

"I loved it", "Magical", "It is very deep for the children", "Amazing."

"It was very beautiful and inspiring. My child keep putting a candle in the middle of the room at home, dressing up in blue and asking me to sing the Advent songs whilst she give out presents- shoes, toys..."

"Our individual candles lit from the central candle symbolised the divine spark in each of us"

"When the room slowly changes from darkness to light, paradise was regained"

"I will remember this for the rest of my life"

"I have taken part in many Advent Spirals over the years as all three of my children have been in Kindergarden. For me it is interesting to see where each child places their candle in the spiral, sometimes they all group together. Some children don't want to go into the dark. At other times the candles are geometrically placed around the spiral."

"During our forest day one child kept coming to show me spiral patterns she had found on the fallen leaves."

"The effect on my child was so deep we have re-enacted it at home several times."

This year as each of our individual candle flames added to the glowing flickering light around the spiral, the warmth of our community was tangible and I later recalled the following verse:

'The healthy social life is found,  
When in the mirror of each human soul  
The whole community finds its reflection  
And when in the community,  
The virtue of each one is living.'  
Rudolf Steiner

We welcome Risa Skinner and her parents to Rebecca's Kindergarden

Thank you for all the help in transporting and placing our climbing logs at the Centre for Early Childhood and for all other maintenance tasks undertaken in the last few weeks.  
We look forward to seeing you all at our end of term festival.

Leigha Hipkin for the Early Years Team

## What's happening in the Classrooms?



### Class 1

We began our journey on September 8th when the children said goodbye to their beloved Kindergartens and walked through the rainbow arch to their new classroom.

The journey continued as we travelled through the adventures of a princess who was bewitched into a red snake, a prince who was bewitched into a big burly bear, a mountain that held secret treasures, six brothers who became swans and finally how we met angels who taught the world how to sing.

The trials and tribulations of the fairy tales have truly echoed life in class one as we all get to know each other and endeavour to work in harmony with each other.

St Michael and his taming of the dragon gave us the strength to stay well and scramble over tree trunks and piles of Autumn leaves at Fulham Palace gardens and then later at Wimbledon Common. We were extremely lucky with the weather when we celebrated Martinmas and the children delighted the darkened woods with their energy, their beautifully made lanterns, lighting the way for us, and their singing.

The children are now ready to rest and restore over the Christmas holiday. I would like to thank their parents for their open communication and support and I wish all the children, their friends and families, a happy and peaceful Christmas.

Pat Alexander



### Class 2

As many of you know, Ms Kupperts had to go to South Africa suddenly last Friday to be with her mother who was in intensive care. Ms Karakonstanti, who knows the class very well after teaching them for two weeks this term as part of her teacher training, has taken the reins meanwhile. The children have been working with numbers, practising, adding to their skills in working with the four processes and times tables. In Ms Kupperts' absence, the children have continued to work with Ms Karakonstanti on poems and songs for the festival at the end of term.

Amanda Bell

## What's happening in the Classrooms?

In **Class 5&6** we are studying Astronomy and Geometry together, discovering how the professors at the first University in Alexandria, Egypt, watched the night sky and were able, using patient and conscientious observation over many many years, to discover and predict the movements of the Sun, the Moon and the planets. This is a perfect time of year to be looking beyond our own lives, our own personal concerns, desires and worries to the passionless, dependable, rhythmic movements of these heavenly bodies, and to wonder about great cosmic events, taking place over unimaginable spans of time. In the face of such things, profound questions arise in all of us, many of which cannot be answered, of course: "Are there any other planets like the Earth?" "Why do some people not believe men have walked on the Moon?" "Are there places in space where you wouldn't be able to see any stars?" and some that can, this one by remembering an experiment we did in the Physics block to show that light is invisible: "If the Sun is always shining, why is it dark in space?"

Amanda Bell

## The Lower School End of Term Festival

Thursday 15th December

### Programme

11:00 Class 2

11:15 Cass 3&4

11:30 Class 1 (FOR PARENTS OF CLASS ONE ONLY)

11:30 Class 5&6

11:45 Class 7&8

All times are approximate. Please arrive in good time as it is disruptive when people come into the room late. Please do not record or take photographs during the presentations.

All parents are welcome to all presentations except class 1, but please give priority to people with children in those classes.

Refreshments will be served after the festival and you are free to take your children home at 12:30.

### Newsletter Contributions

The next newsletter will be distributed on Friday 13th January. Deadline for contributions is 6pm Wednesday 11th January. We are always keen to publish contributions from parents in the newsletter. If you have something interesting/funny/controversial/moving/profound to share, however small, please send it to me. Email please, to: [amandabell@mac.com](mailto:amandabell@mac.com)

### Education News Clippings

The Steiner Waldorf Schools Fellowship office sends out regular media clippings about education issues to anyone who is interested. Some of them are controversial and not all of them are complimentary about Steiner education, but we're all grown up aren't we? So if you are interested and not scared of a little criticism, email Jasmin at [forjasmin@googlemail.com](mailto:forjasmin@googlemail.com) and she will forward them to you.

### Study Group

The study group with Philip Martyn is now going strong, every Wednesday morning from about 8:40. Speak to Andrea if you would like to join.

# Community Section

Please note that the school does not endorse or recommend, either in general or in particular, anything offered in the Community Pages and parents are advised to check the qualifications of practitioners or people offering services here.

## **HANDMADE NATURAL SOAP AVAILABLE**

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Please contact Brian Jacques

(Class 7&8 teacher) 07759917112

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