

Part Two: The Curriculum Before the Journey



By Melisa & Erik Nielsen
Illustrated by Amber Hellewell

The primary task of a Waldorf teacher is to understand the human being in body, soul, and spirit. From this understanding will grow the approach, the curriculum, and the methods of an education capable of addressing the whole child. ~ Roberto Trostli, *Rhythms of Learning*

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Before the Journey

Introduction (for Before the Journey) written in 2009. A few months ago when I had the prompting to write this volume, I intended for it to be an answer for those with preschoolers that were unsure of how to weave a life with a child in that age group without actually moving forward in academics. Many things became apparent to me as the book came together, one is that we often as mothers worry about our children far more than we should, we lay guilt on ourselves and on one another for things that should just be enjoyed. All of us have been to the playgroup where someone has been bragging about how smart little Johnny is or how Betsy knows all of this or that... those moms are easy to find. What I didn't expect was to realize just how insecure many of those mothers really are – this is why they often extol the academic virtues of their 3 year old! For some reason, mom needs a boost and rather than being comfortable with herself, she will often hunt for that recognition through her child. When I realized this, I was pretty shocked. I thought about how much we lie to each other – I used to think we really only lied to ourselves, but we lie to each other!

The other interesting thing I observed while researching this book is that when mothers are balanced and cared for, meaning they feel spiritually strong and they are honored by their mate and the rest of their family then they do not play the lying game. These moms just play with their kids! When mom starts to feel frustration at dad or pressure from her family over this or that, coupled with neglecting prayer or meditation, time alone, etc. then we start to see a mom crying for help – she may not see it that way and she may get really upset when someone tries to point it out to her, she has to discover it on her own and then make her own path toward a healthy relationship with herself – when she does that then everyone else will honor her too. I found that moms who can learn to do this honoring of herself when her children are young often have no need to even think about the lying game and are in fact pretty good at noticing others that do it and steer clear of that energy.

It is my hope this book will help mom relax a bit and enjoy the journey, to get to know herself as she enjoys the rhythm of life. I believe our time here on Earth is to learn and gain knowledge, knowledge about ourselves and those we came here to be with, knowledge that we will need later.

When my older children were younger I had a pretty good Waldorf support community most of the time and I never felt like I *needed* something more. Today things are different, the method is growing by leaps and bounds around the world and parents are coming to it with younger children wondering where on Earth to start. Most information on the market does not begin until kindergarten age, which in Waldorf speak isn't until age 5 or 6, and for new families that are coming from more mainstream thinking, that is a hard transition. I see a troubling trend of parents so worried they will miss something that they lay out money for guides that appear to be Waldorf but really only start this process of schooling with a young child, so I decided to write this as a guide to flowing through life with a little person, in doing so, it became so much more. I think families of all sizes will enjoy this book and I hope that most moms will find themselves in at least one of the characters. It is written quite different than all my other books, it is my first stab at fiction! It was a lot of fun to put together, a bit of me lives in each of the mothers at their various stages. If you are blessed with a toddler or preschooler, I encourage you to take advantage of this time to learn new

skills and build your library. There are several books mentioned in the appendix that you can take your time to purchase while your children are young that will stretch you far beyond these beginning years. Learn the crafts of Waldorf education, knitting, doll making, painting and drawing – this time is such a blessing for you, you have the wonderful luxury of tending to the daily needs of a small person that thinks the world of you, your only job is to play. Have fun Mom!

Autumn

Meet Mindy: She is the vibrant mom of 2 year old Paul and wife to Richard, a web developer, in Boise, Idaho. She was introduced to Waldorf while pregnant with Paul and has enjoyed building a happy home for her family in a one bedroom condo. She loves learning new things and enjoys getting out to share ideas with other moms.

September 10

I passed a woman while shopping with Paul today, while he was having one of his fun tantrums right in the middle of the grocery store, and she had the nerve to say to me “I bet you’ll be glad when you can send him off to preschool!” Preschool? He’s only two! The thought of it turns my stomach! And the thought that so many parents feel so guilty about enjoying their children that they do the same... cart their wee ones off to preschool. I mean, sure there are moms that feel like they need to work, but the idea of preschool just... well I could write for days about it. The comments of the lady, while well intended, made me think about how happy I am to have been given Rahima’s book when I was pregnant with Paul, otherwise I might be carting him off to preschool!

I feel so blessed to have this time with Paul. Richard and I waited so long for him to come along that I want to savor every minute, even the tantrums! I kick myself because I know if we had just gotten a snack before even going into the store the tantrum never would have happened.

I decided this week that I would start to recall things to be thankful for – today’s list: a washing machine, my husband and son, indoor plumbing, oh and granola... what a great breakfast we had today with granola in our yogurt!

I was really thinking about what I wanted to put on the nature table for our upcoming fall festivals so Paul and I took our afternoon walk through the neighborhood today and we gathered leaves and acorns for our table. When we got home I was so inspired that I sifted through my stash of yarn ball ends and found the beautiful bulky gold I used for Mom’s birthday scarf and grabbed my #9 knitting needles and went to town. I made up this little knitting pattern for a gnome to sit in our leaves.

My gnome pattern:

Materials needed: yarn in whatever color and gage you prefer, needles in the appropriate size for your yarn, and some undyed wool roving to stuff with.

Cast on 26 stitches

Knit 18 rows

Row 19 BO first 6 stitches knit to end of row

Row 20 BO first 6 stitches knit to end of row

Knit 6 rows

Knit 2 together

September 15

Wow! I can't believe my entries are so far apart, chasing Paul wears me out some days – in fact it really got me thinking about my sleep. I was talking to some other moms with toddlers at our play group yesterday and one of them suggested I go to bed earlier and get up before Paul so that I can feel fresh when he gets up. So last night I gave it a try... I nursed Paul to sleep and instead of getting up to surf the net I stayed in bed. Funny thing is that Richard got bored and came to bed too. He and I both woke up with renewed energy this morning and were able to steal some alone time that we both craved. We ate breakfast together, chatted about our day, and we even prayed together! It was the first time I remember praying together in months. By the time Paul woke up we were both ready to greet him. Richard went off to work and we started our day here at home.

During my quiet time this morning I started thinking about our rhythm. I know I've read in many Waldorf books and on some websites that it is so important to start having rhythm, that toddlers have a need to know what is coming up next. So I looked at our schedule and decided that I would try to stick to this:

Monday we clean – Paul is having fun following me around with a wet rag.

Tuesday we bake – Paul has had so much fun peeking at the mixer as it turns; whenever he hears me get it out he comes running!

Wednesday – we meet Daddy in town for lunch

Thursday – our playgroup

Friday – we will continue visiting Grandma at the center. I love that Paul has a chance to be around her. All the little old ladies there just love his smile when we walk in the door. It is a blessing. I wish our apartment was bigger; I would bring Grandma here to live with us.

Speaking of Grandma – last week she gave me her yummy soup recipe, I can't wait to try it. Dad brought me more veggies from his garden and if I can keep Paul from eating all the carrots we'll have a wonderful soup lunch for my book club this month.

Grandma's Crock Pot Stew or Soup

4-5 diced potatoes

4-5 diced carrots

1 canned or fresh corn

2 cans cream of mushroom soup

2 cans water

2 pouches onion soup mix

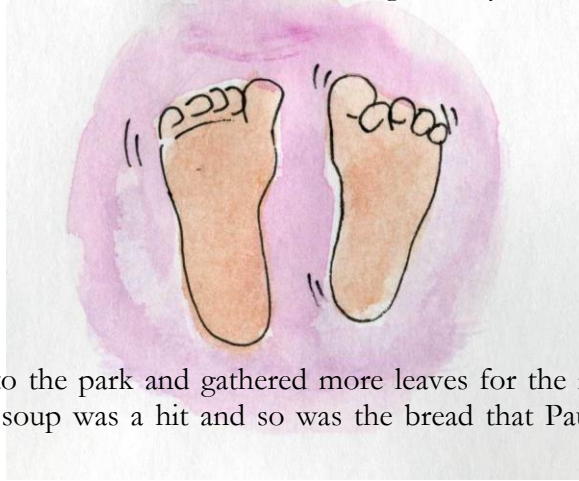
Put all in a crock pot and cook on low for 6-8 hours.

I finally picked up the book *A Child's Seasonal Treasury* by Betty Jones this week. I was so thankful when Richard said we had a few extra dollars this month that I knew exactly what I would spend it on.



Oh! I nearly forgot! I am thankful for Grandma, my parents, making love in the wee hours of the morning, the laughter of Paul when I tickle his toes each morning. Today I made up a silly little song for him.

*Tickle your toes
Tickle your toes
Mama's gonna tickle, tickle, tickle your toes
Tickle your toes,
Tickle your toes,
Daddy's gonna tickle, tickle, tickle your toes.*



September 18

What a great day! Richard took Paul to the park and gathered more leaves for the nature table while I had my book club. The soup was a hit and so was the bread that Paul and Richard helped me make this morning.

Whole Wheat Sandwich Bread

- 1 ½ milk
- 2 tablespoons lukewarm water (can be omitted if baking in summer)
- 2 tablespoons butter or vegetable oil
- 1 ½ teaspoons salt
- 2 tablespoons sugar
- 3 ½ cups whole wheat flour
- 2 ½ teaspoons instant yeast

Combine all ingredients until you've made a smooth but not dry dough. Place it in a greased bowl for 60 to 90 minutes – it expands but won't double. Shape the dough into a 9" X 5" bread lightly greased bread pan, raise 30 to 45 minutes. Preheat oven at 375 F and cook for 35 to 40 minutes. Cool and enjoy.

I had such a blast with all my friends. I pulled out *A Child's Seasonal Treasury* and we started talking about Michaelmas. Julie's got the oldest child, but he's only four so we chatted about having a party where we can just share the spirit of the festival and let the children enjoy the food and maybe a simple craft. We decided to have it at the park near our apartment so we can continue to enjoy the autumn, it has been so pretty this year. When I started telling Richard about it, he volunteered to come up with a story about dragons to tell the children. How did I get to be so blessed? We have been praying together each morning and spending more intimate time together since we changed our sleeping habits – it has been great for our relationship. Getting up earlier has him going to work earlier and so he is able to come home earlier too... Paul is loving that!

Paul is also loving the new finger plays and verses I started using from the book.

His favorites are:

*Two little black birds, sitting on a wall,
One named Peter, one named Paul
Fly away Peter, fly away Paul,
Come back Peter, come back Paul.*

*Blow wind blow,
And go mill go,
That the miller may grind his corn.
So that the baker may take it,
And into bread make it,
And bring us a load in the morn.*



Grandma said she remembers telling Mom something that sounded like the “Blow Wind Blow” one when she was a girl. It is so funny how life just recycles itself.

On my gratitude list today... Julie! She introduced me to Rudolf Steiner Audio – I was so excited to download *Michaelmas and the Soul-Forces of Man* for Richard and me to listen to. Also on my list today is the postman! He brought my order of painting supplies and I can't wait to get started. I got three colors of Stockmar paint, Circle Red, Circle Yellow and Circle Blue, some painting paper, three paint boards – I wanted all three of us to experience painting together, and some paint brushes, three really fat ones and a couple of thinner ones for Richard and I to play with, oh and another little book: *Echoes of a Dream* by Susan Smith. Tomorrow after church we will have to pull these out to play!

September 19

Church was so uplifting today. Our sermon was on the power of unity and Rev. Arden recommended a book by Douglas Wood called *Old Turtle and the Broken Truth*. She read the book during the service and I was so touched by it. I just hope that I can do my part to help Paul understand that we are all one. Richard and I spent a lot of time talking about it today while we painted and it was amazing how our beautiful conversation came forth in our paintings.

Paul had the most fun painting, it was a first for us all. We mixed our paint, one part paint to one part water – even though it said in my book resources that we could really fiddle with the intensity by changing the ratios. I soaked our paper in the bathtub for about five minutes and put it on our paint boards, I used some old rags to soak up the extra water but realized while I was doing that, that perhaps it would have been worth ordering the sponges so that is on my list for next time. We all started painting with just one color.



I made up a cute little story about a little gnome named Paul (Paul just giggled) and how he was really careful with his beard, how he liked it prim and proper and clean. I think he actually understood me and that I meant the paintbrush! He only tried to eat the brush once and so I reminded him of the gnomes beard and he stopped, dipped it in water and played with the yellow paint a little more. We had so much fun that we decided to try to paint as a family every Sunday after church.

I decided that taking a Waldorf art class would be high on my list. It will be so much fun to have this skill and be ready for Paul when he starts developing a bigger interest in painting.

Some gratitude... for great authors like Douglass Wood, for patience that I have developed since I started greeting the day early, for Rev. Arden.

September 25

I hate that it has been days since I last wrote; I have been all out of whack and sick with a flu bug. Today I feel better. Paul has been such a great sport, he brought me drinks of water in bed and books for me to read to him, I was starting to feel really badly about not working on our rhythm when Julie reminded me that life is life and I have to take it in stride. She took Paul yesterday so I could sleep and this morning I felt like a new woman – just in the nick of time too, our Michaelmas celebration is today. Paul and I spent the morning making dragon bread – I just used our regular bread recipe and added some herbs to it, brushed it with a bit of butter and voila! Richard took an early day and he'll meet us at the park all set with his fabulous story about a dragon, he's not told me a word of it so I will be just as surprised as the children in our festival group. I finished listening to Steiner's Michaelmas lectures while I was sick and found myself being really thankful for him.

September 26

Richard's story was so cool and we made corn husk dolls with the children. The dolls were easy, I took some great pictures. Richard used some of the dolls for the gnomes in his story.

Richard's story went a bit like this...

Young George and the Baby Dragon

Once there was a gnome village (Paul the painting gnome lived there!) that was plagued by a big fire breathing dragon baby. The dragon baby was much bigger than the gnomes and they were afraid of him. They were not sure what to do so one day two of the bravest gnomes went to the gnome king for a meeting. The gnome king said he had a human friend named George who promised to help them when ever the gnomes were in need all he would have to do is raise a white flag with a red cross on it. The gnomes were surprised that the king would have a human friend since so many humans had stopped believing in gnomes. The king said that once when George was very young he had gotten lost in the woods while picking berries and sat down on a log to cry. The gnome king was just a plant gnome at the time and he felt badly for George and because George had a pure heart he still believed in the garden folk, George was able to see the king. The king helped him find his way home and George told him that if he ever needed help to raise the signal.



The gnomes raised the signal and within an hour a young man on a handsome white horse came through the forest to the flag. The gnome king was there to greet George. George bowed as is custom before royalty. The gnome king was so glad to see George, he told him of the gnome's plight, of the baby dragon that came around breathing fire and how the gnomes were so afraid. George was a good and kind young man, he promised to do what he could to find the dragon. Two days passed, on the morning of the third day the gnomes saw George and with him was the baby dragon wearing a muzzle so his fire could not come out. Steam kept rising from the dragon's nostrils and he coughed and gagged. George explained that the dragon had the hiccups and was coming to see the gnomes for a cure but every time he got near, he would breathe fire with each hiccup. The gnome king got out his healing crystal and touched the poor beast on his nose and *poof* no more baby dragon hiccups! The dragon was so excited he

flew up in the air and did summersaults (at this point in the story Richard and the children did them too!) When the dragon came back down to earth he asked the gnomes how he could ever repay them, he asked if he could live there in the wood and help protect and nurture the earth. The gnome king said he would be delighted and also if the dragon if he would help them bake bread each week. The dragon agreed. They all lived happily until their next adventure.

At this point the children all cheered and we devoured our dragon bread. What a fun day we had. I am still feeling a bit off. If I don't turn around by tomorrow I think I had better go get checked out.

Today I am most thankful for great friends and wonderful time to spend together.

October 5

Well I do feel silly. It would seem that I had a perfectly good reason for feeling out of sorts! I am 10 weeks pregnant! We are so excited and I am relieved to know that being tired was just part of being pregnant. Paul understands more than I thought he would, he was patting my belly today while nursing – not sure if we will keep up the nursing, I just decided not to think about it right now. He isn't nursing that often. I know some moms love tandem nursing and some hate it, I guess I have some praying to do.

Today we started changing our nature table again, Halloween is coming and we have some preparing to do for it. I needle felted the cutest little pumpkin to sit next to our fall gnome. Richard said he was brewing a Halloween story about our gnome kingdom. He's so cute, before bed each night when we curl up together, he has been telling Paul a new little adventure about the baby dragon and the gnomes. Paul lays still snuggled up to me nursing while he quietly listens to his daddy tell him adventures of putting roots to bed or harvesting big crystals. Richard is such a gift to my soul. I feel very lucky.

We are still rising early, although I have taken to lying down with Paul each afternoon so I can get a few more zzz's.

Needle felting a pumpkin (see online support material for step by step instructions on needle felting projects for little ones)

***Materials needed: undyed wool roving for base, different shades of orange for outer shell, a bit of brown for the stem and some green for a leaf. Needles for felting and a foam base. All of these supplies are available on the Internet; please see the resource section for details.*

After you have decided what size you want your pumpkin, begin with a base of undyed wool, shape it with your needle until you achieve the firmness you want (I find this entirely up to the person doing the project. If it has the possibility of being played with then I suggest making it more firm so that it holds together well.) Shape your wool into a basic pumpkin shape and then begin to lightly drape the orange over the top. I like to layer it so that I can get nice coverage, so start thin, needle that into place and then move on, building the color. Once you have the base covered then you have to needle in the ridges of the pumpkin and this is done by going over a spot several times until you have the indentation you want. Once your pumpkin is finished then start on the stem. The stem is made simply by gathering brown roving and felting it into a fat snake! It need not be long, just big enough for a stem. Once you have that done then needle it into place. Do the same with your leaf. Enjoy!

October 8

I decided that since we are coming up on a celebration of the dead that it would be a great time for me to catch up on some of our family history research. I want Paul to have a relationship with his ancestors and what a better time to think about family that has passed than Halloween! I pulled out my scrapbooking and worked on that a bit today while Paul pattered around me drawing in his own little scrapbook I made him – he was delighted when I put together a little book just for him. Thankfully he is not eating crayons anymore! We spent the day singing fall songs and scrapbooking.

Halloween songs Paul loves (of course from *A Child's Seasonal Treasury*)

Three Little Witches (to the tune of One Little, Two Little, Three Little Indians)

*One little, two little, three little witches,
Fly over haystacks, fly over ditches
Slide down the moon without any hitches
Hey, ho, Halloween's here!*

Five Little Pumpkins

*Here's five little pumpkins sitting on a gate,
The first one said, "Oh my, it's getting late!"
The second one said, "Oh I don't care!"
The third one said, "There something in the air!"
The fourth one said, "Let's run, run, run!"
The fifth one said, "It's only Halloween fun!"
Then WHOOSH goes the wind and OUT goes the light.
And five little pumpkins roll out of sight!*



I am so thankful to be blessed with this growing baby in my belly. I wonder what it will be like to parent two.

October 12

The weather is getting cooler and I am thankful for the climate of Boise. Our friends in eastern Idaho told us of their fall snowstorm and I decided I was happy right here! I can feel myself getting my stamina back and not being so sleepy, I even think I felt this little bean in my belly jumping around while I was laying down the other day. Paul is being a good sport about my tender breasts and being gentle when he nurses. He even went to bed without nursing last night! Richard was telling him about the Gnome King and some special crystals he needed to grow for Halloween to keep away the hobgoblins and Paul didn't even need me! I am not sure how I feel about it but it was nice to have a long stretch of sleep without nursing. This morning he hopped out of bed and asked for breakfast, all night without nursing must have left his tummy rumbling! He devoured the scrambled eggs I made him.

Halloween is coming fast so I thought today we'd head out to Mom and Dad's garden to find some pumpkins.

October 13

We had a ball yesterday gathering up pumpkins, Richard kept giving me odd looks as I gathered yet another one – he asked me how many I was planning to carve, then he stopped teasing me and said that I gave him a wonderful idea for his Halloween story with the gnomes. We had a wonderful dinner with Mom and Dad. Richard so loves them. I know he wishes his parents were still around, thankfully he has adopted mine with no trouble!



After church we painted lovely fall pictures. We mixed reds and yellows today and made beautiful backgrounds that I'll use for invites to our Halloween party.

We also started carving pumpkins... good thing our condo has so many windows, otherwise I don't know where we'd put them all. I think I brought home 15 total! Thankfully some of them are little and we put them on the nature table next to our needle felted one. Two of the 15 are for baking so that left Richard cleaning eight pumpkins. We had a mountain of seeds when we were done! Paul and I got our hands dirty too, we pulled the seeds out of the fiber and laid them on a baking sheet to toast.

Here's what we did: Laid out our seeds on cookie sheets, melted a half a stick of butter and added some seasonings and toasted them in our oven for several hours. They turned out wonderful! They will be great little treats at our play group this week.

It has been a busy day. I welcome sleep.

October 20

We have been so busy that I have neglected my journaling! I hope I can keep it up when I am running after two little ones. Paul is so cute, each night when it gets dark we light the Jack-O-Lanterns together and turn out all the lights in the apartment so that we can enjoy the candlelight, he loves it! We enjoyed our dinner this way last night and it was a lot of fun. Paul has been nursing less and less, I know my milk supply is down from being pregnant and

at first I worried but then after praying decided that this was a natural progression. Paul is still nuzzled up with us both each night to sleep and listens to his daddy's wonderful stories so I feel at peace about it.

Richard threw me for a loop yesterday when he asked me if I would consider moving to Iowa. I have a lot of praying to do. I think tomorrow I will devote my morning quiet time to doing some Internet research on Waldorf in Iowa.

October 21

What an interesting day! I got online this morning and found a great egroup of Waldorf homeschooling families and I even found a mom in Iowa. Her name is Jennifer and she is divorced with three children, one is around Paul's age, a little girl. Jennifer said that she's got a little group of moms that she meets with regularly and that they are always open to new families. I guess now all I need to do is put it to prayer. I love Richard and I know he wants to grow in his career, I want to support him in that. He would do it for me... I would miss my parents so much – and grandma, I would miss her too. I suppose we will just have to see what prayer tells me.



October 25

I am so thankful for my prayer time. I prayed and got the immediate answer that I should support my husband, that means we are moving! Mom and Dad promised to visit me often and bring Grandma and with Richard's new income we will be able to fly home regularly. So it seems that after Martinmas we are going to start packing, in the meantime I am getting ready for Halloween. Paul's costume is just about done. He has been loving gnomes since Richard started his storytelling so we came up with the perfect little gnome costume complete with beard and hat.

November 1

We had so much fun yesterday! Paul is getting so big. He has been practicing "trick or treat" all week long so he could be perfect when we went out. We started the evening with our little playgroup, they all came to our apartment and we had a wonderful tomato soup that I made... from a box! It is so not like me to do that but chasing Paul and being pregnant has me worn out a lot of days so I called Mom and she giggled and told me to go buy the soup we like from the store, make up some boxed pasta to go with it and be happy! So like a good girl I did just what my mommy told me to. We got bread bowls from our local bakery and had a wonderful feast. After we ate we took the kids trick or treating and then came back to our house for stories.

When we got back, Richard was so cute about the Sugar Plum fairies. He had all the little ones following him into the kitchen to get a bag for their offering. He helped the children decorate their bags with beautiful drawings of fairies and Jack O Lanterns and told them how their candy left as an offering for the fairies would help the fairies build their town, and every piece of gum or Reese's cup could be a wall for a fairy house or a part of their city buildings! The children ate it all up, munching on their 10 pieces while he weaved his story.

Afterward he told them about Fairy Central. He said that all parents get a special phone number when they become parents that allows only them to call upon magical beings like sugar plum fairies, tooth fairies, and even Saint Nick! The children were in awe – I thought that was it for his storytelling for the night, but then he had them all help him light the Jack O Lanterns while he told them a gnome story too.

The Gnome Kingdom's Hallowed Eve

In the cool October evenings the root gnomes began to carve their pumpkins for the sacred night of Samhain, a night when the veil between Heaven and Earth is very thin. Each year the root gnomes gathered enough pumpkins from their garden to make jack-o-lanterns all over the forest to frighten away any naughty spirits that might come to scare those who live in the Gnome King's forest. This year Taproot and Clementine, two root gnomes, were given the job of setting out the Jack-O-Lanterns. The two carefully lit them all and set around the forest floor. While they were working the fairies and elves came out to greet them and offer them help. Sweetpea, one of the sugar plum fairies told Taproot that she was really glad that they were setting out the pumpkins now, she said that there had been noise in the forest the night before that made her afraid and she didn't want to miss her flight to pick up Sugar Plum offerings because of it. Another fairy, Bicuspid, one of the tooth fairies said that she heard the noise too. She said it was a wailing noise that was coming from a little hut in the meadow beyond the forest and it was so dreadful that she was afraid to go near it. This sent shivers down Clementine's spine!

"What could it be Taproot?" she asked. "I don't know" said Taproot "but we better let the gnome king know about it."



Taproot and Clementine finished setting out the Jack O Lanterns and made their way back to the mushroom doorway that leads into the earth to find the gnome king. They arrived at the great hall just in time, the gnomes were all gathering together for their daily meeting. The gnome king started the meeting with a prayer of thanksgiving.

For the Creator who gave us life, we thank thee,
For the Mother Earth who gives us work, we thank thee,
For our fellowship and safety, we thank thee.
For our abundance and wisdom, we thank thee.
Amen.

"Now is there anyone with business that needs to be attended to before we enjoy our Hallowed Eve?", asked the king.

Taproot and Clementine both stood and the gnomes in the assembly all turned toward them. The two gnomes walked to the front of the great crystal hall, stood on the sermon stone and began to speak.

"Your highness," Taproot began, "Clementine and I were setting out the pumpkins this evening and were shocked by a bit of news from two fairies. They told us of a howling they have heard coming from a hut in the meadow outside the forest. We were worried since we haven't had any trouble on Samhain from naughty spirits for many years."

"Noble little gnomes," said the king "thank you for bringing this to our attention. We must send a group to investigate. Perhaps we could assign two strong crystal working gnomes to accompany you on a quest to find the source of the howling?"

Clementine was worried, she didn't feel brave enough to go on this quest, but the gnome king sensed her fright and asked her to come forward.

“Clementine,” the gnome king began, “I would like to put you in charge of this special stone. It is to be worn around your neck and will give you courage on your quest and will also speed healing to all creatures should you meet any in need.” He placed the crystal necklace over Clementine’s head and she noticed the beautiful amber color of the stone. She immediately felt better, stronger and able to go on her quest.

Two crystal mining gnomes, Jet and Jasper gladly volunteered for the quest and the four gnomes left the gnome gathering hall and made the walk through the mushroom doorway and into the forest. The air was alive with song and the gnomes were greeted by fairies and elves inviting them to join in their fun. Taproot found Bicuspid who was willing to show the gnomes the path to the little hut. The troop of magical folk made their way through the forest and across the meadow. By the time they had gotten to the edge of the wood they could hear the howling. Clementine’s crystal shone bright and she felt happy to be on the quest with the other gnomes. When they arrived at the hut, a large black cat hissed at the gnomes. Bicuspid got afraid and quickly flew back to the safety of the forest. Jet offered his hand to the cat, calming the beast and then began talking to it.

“Meow?” questioned Jet.

“Meow, muw, Onyx, meow,.” answered the cat.

Jet turned to the gnomes, “This is Onyx, he says he is sorry for hissing at you. It is his job to protect Ella, the tiny witch that lives here. She has been sick and moans by day and howls by night in pain. He wonders if we have come to help.”

The gnomes all relaxed, thank goodness there were no monsters in that hut! Clementine immediately jumped into action. She asked Onyx if he would help them get into the hut so they could help Ella. Onyx showed the gnomes to the hole in the hut wall where he went in and out as he pleased and he helped them all get in. It was dark and dreary and in the corner the howls of a poor sad little witch could be heard. Jet and Jasper found candles to light and at once the room shone with a light of hope. Ella was so surprised to see the little gnomes in her hut, but she wasn’t afraid. She knew that the gnomes were good magical creatures that helped care for Mother Earth and all who lived with her. Clementine, who wasn’t much smaller than Ella, climbed up into Ella’s bed and took her hand.

“Tell me sweet Ella, where do you hurt?” asked Clementine.

“My teeth, they hurt so badly” replied Ella

Ella opened her mouth to show the gnomes and her teeth were in bad shape. Ella confessed that for the last three years she had not left a Sugar Plum offering for the fairies and that she had not brushed her teeth. She told the gnomes that rock candy was her favorite food because it reminded her so much of the healing crystals she loved to collect, she just couldn’t part with it and so she kept it and ate it all herself. She was ashamed at her greed and cried. Clementine comforted her and told her that the gnome king sent her with the magical amber stone that would help her heal, she took it off from around her neck and put it on to Ella’s. Immediately Ella felt better, after a few minutes she could dry her tears and sit up in bed.

Jasper stepped forward and told Ella about the best way to care for her teeth and told her that when she cared for them and they fell out naturally then the tooth fairies could come for a visit and leave her a prize. He also reminded her that the sugar plum fairies leave prizes for their offerings too. Ella promised to do a better job at caring for her teeth. Jasper invited Ella back to the forest for their festival and reminded Ella that she need only keep 10 pieces of candy, the rest goes to the fairies. Ella promised. The group made their way back to the forest to enjoy the party.

When Ella returned home, she washed her face, combed her pretty black witches hair, quieted the night fire and set aside 10 pieces of candy from her festival bag. She made an offering bag for the sugar plum fairies, placed her candy offering in it, said her prayers and went to sleep. The next morning to her surprise there were two gifts, one was a beautiful pink and purple toothbrush and the other was a beautiful moonstone.

Ella and the forest gnomes became great friends and went on to have many adventures. The End.

Richard's ability to pull a story together is amazing, I just loved the excitement he had when telling it to the children, I could tell he had been brewing it for some time.

Today I think I will start going through things to begin packing for our move, but before we do that, I think Paul and I will take our morning walk at the cemetery to visit Grandpa. I miss him so much, he was a great storyteller too, sometimes I wonder if he speaks through Richard...

November 6

We just arrived home from our weekend house hunting trip to Des Moines. I was surprised that we were able to find something in our price range so quickly and it is a house! The owners were great, they offered to rent it to us until we get settled and can make arrangements to buy it – I wondered how much of it had to do with me being pregnant and looking like we needed someone to help us! I am just so excited, in the spring Paul will have a yard and there is a park nearby. I was also able to meet Jennifer while we were there, she seems like she has her hands very full but is so delightful. I am not sure how she does it.

Packing is going well, not much more to do, thankfully we don't own a lot! Next week's festival will be my last with our playgroup, I am trying not to think about it, I will miss them so much. They have helped guide me – who knows where I would be – or Paul! He'd be crying his heart out in some preschool while I felt guilty all day!

Today is Sunday so after church we'll paint, mom and dad said they would come over too and paint with us. They said that they wanted to come to our Martinmas festival so they will come and work on their paintings for their lanterns. It will be so hard to leave them.

November 11

Well our lanterns are all ready, my chili is in the crock pot, my pie will be started shortly, and we are excited for our festival. We are meeting at the park tonight to build a fire, eat chili and have fun. Mom surprised me last week with a book on my booklist, *Festivals, Family, and Food* by Diana Carey and Judy Large. The book has a great little verse in it that we'll sing for our lantern walk tonight.

*The sunlight fast is dwindling
My little lamp needs kindling
The beam shines far in darkest night
Dear lantern guard me with your light.*



My favorite pumpkin pie recipe from Grandma

1 1/4 cups pumpkin puree, canned or fresh
3/4 cup sugar
1/2 teaspoon salt
1 teaspoon pumpkin pie spice
1 teaspoon all-purpose flour
2 eggs, lightly beaten
1 cup whipping cream
2 tablespoons water
1/2 teaspoon vanilla extract
1 unbaked pastry shell (9-inch)



Combine pumpkin, sugar, salt, spices and flour in a medium mixing bowl. Add eggs; mix well. Add cream, water, and vanilla; mix well. Pour into pastry-lined pie pan. Bake at 400° for 15 minutes; reduce heat to 350 F and bake about 35 minutes longer, or until center is set.

Richard has been so busy flying back and forth between here and Des Moines to get us ready for the move that we don't have a gnome story for tonight, but we'll just tell the traditional one, it is one of my favorites anyway.



A story of Martin

Once there was a boy named Martin and he wanted so badly to serve God but his father wanted him to be a brave soldier. Martin wanted to please his father so when he grew old enough, he became a soldier. One day after being a soldier for a while and having fought in many battles, Martin came to the gates of a city where he was planning to spend the night. At the gates there was a poor beggar man, wearing almost nothing, he looked cold and Martin felt sorry for him. Martin jumped down from his horse and tore his uniform cloak in half, he covered the poor beggar with it to warm him. That night Martin found a warm place to sleep with a comfy bed and he had the most wonderful dream. He dreamt that Jesus was the beggar man and that his very cloak warmed the Savior! After that Martin didn't care about being a soldier anymore. He loved his father but he had done his duty for his country and his family by serving them, now he would become a monk and serve God.

Martinmas is the feast day of St. Martin, he is the patron saint to beggars and outcasts. The lighting of candles in lanterns and walking through the streets in late fall is a symbol of Martin's shining light in the darkness of the coming winter. He lights the way to the winter solstice.

November 15

Well this morning the movers come. I am so nervous. They will pack us up and Paul and I will spend three nights with Mom and Dad. Richard leaves tomorrow for Des Moines, Paul and I will fly out on the 18th. I am excited but sad at the same time. Jennifer, my Internet

buddy from Des Moines is assuring me that they will have a fun filled winter with plenty of activities – I hope so, that will help.

November 20

Here I sit in a room full of boxes not sure where to start. Richard is already gone for the day and Paul still sleeps. I promised myself I wouldn't cry today! Like I will really be able to keep that promise! Paul and my growing belly will keep my mind off of how much I miss Boise. Next week is Thanksgiving and I have no idea what I will do. Mom always helps me or I help her, I've never done it alone. Richard told me not to worry – his suggestion was to just bag the big meal and order Chinese. I might just take him up on that. I do think I know where the drawing paper is though so I bet we will at least make hand turkeys.

November 29

I think I have the most wonderful family in all the world. I sit here this morning all amazed as my husband and son sleep and my parents and grandma are at the hotel down the street. Richard made good on his Chinese food dinner suggestion – only imagine my surprise when I opened the door expecting a delivery person and my parents were standing there holding bags of food from Ming's down the street! They even brought Grandma! Paul was so excited and I just sat my overemotional pregnant self down and bawled. We ate the food after a wonderful prayer offered by Dad and enjoyed an evening of games and stories. Next week, I get to meet Jennifer at our first play group, I am really looking forward to more mom interaction.

Winter

Meet Jennifer: She is the upbeat divorced mom of three active children, William is 8, Sariah is 6 and Hannah is 2. Along with being divorced she is trying to find herself, she has two best friends, one is Pagan and then other Jewish, right now Jennifer is falling somewhere in between. She runs a business from her home and works to have a good relationship with her children's father, Jack, although it can be a challenge. She longs to have someone love her the way she deserves to be.

December 1

Jack called me this morning. He sure knows how to start my day off! He wanted to discuss our visitation this month. Sometimes I think being divorced from him is as hard as being married to him was! If it wasn't for the divorce decree I just don't think we'd get anywhere. I asked him if he would be willing to let me have the children for Saint Nicholas and the Winter Solstice and then he could have them for Christmas. I hate feeling like they are being bartered – they are children, not things. Things got heated and so I excused myself from my end of the conversation to go pray. I am always amazed at the affect it has on me and how I present myself. I called Jack back and apologized for getting upset and we decided he would come to my house for St. Nick and the Solstice and I could go to his for Christmas morning. Thank goodness that is resolved.

The kids are so excited for Saint Nicholas, they have been buzzing for the last two months. I am putting the finishing touches on Waldorf dolls for both girls and with William being so into knights these days, I was able to talk Jack into getting him a great castle set I found.

I am trying not to be overwhelmed with Advent. There is so much I could be doing. I decided that since the kids would be with Jack for Christmas that I would have my Advent ending just before Yule so we don't miss anything. I have this long list of things I want to do... baking, knitting, crafting, more baking, reading... but I think I came up with a plan that will keep me sane and the kids loving it. I am going to take the month off from teaching school like I have done in the past just so we can have fun, we work so much, I work so much – we need a break.



Last week, we started advent and we had a ball. The kids got home from spending an overindulgent Thanksgiving weekend with their dad and I greeted them with a fire in the hearth, hot cocoa and sugar cookies I spent the day making and decorating and was all ready with the *Festival of Stones* (by Reg Down) book! We have fallen in love with the book this year. I think they are all at the ripe age for it. We started it in the fall and I was so excited to see that they are a series. I just love that they are a collection of little stories that can take us through the season. Of course I spun my own tale as well. I can't get one over on them, they wanted to know what our gnomes were doing for advent – good thing I was prepared! I spun a story based on the nature table cycle that way it will be easy for me to add to each week.

I have also been working through a great Steiner lecture for inner work, *Signs and Symbols of the Christmas Festival* and I am so impressed with what I have taken from it and so confused by what I don't yet understand! I know that it just takes time. I know that my understanding deepens each time I read his work or listen to the audio lectures. I know that since my divorce, I have allowed myself to really dig deeply into my spiritual self, a side that I could only scratch the surface of when I was with Jack. I don't blame him, I just think our relationship consumed so much of me that I wouldn't look at myself the way I needed to. I dream of a man that I could share this journey with, one who I didn't have to explain myself to everyday, someone who just knows me. Does he exist? For now I'll just spend my evenings with Steiner!

The Gnome's Yule Tide Advent Mystery Part 1

Deep inside Mother Earth where the root babies sleep, the gnomes are working all year long, tending the root babies, gathering the stones, making sure all is well. All of the gnome kingdoms over the Earth work together by taking care of their own space and enjoying their own inner work of gaining wisdom. King Melchizedek, the high king and ruler of all the gnomes, was righteous and wise and led his gnomes to do their work with great care and helped them to gain all the wisdom they came to this earth to gain. Each year the king issued a wisdom challenge to all the gnomes. The Creator picks three of the wisest gnomes to come before the king for the challenge. If they complete the challenge, they move up to help in other parts of the kingdom.

Knock, knock, knock went King Melchizedek's crystal gavel as he called the gnomes to order. "My brethren and sisters, please come to order. We have much business to cover on this first day of Advent."

All the gnomes filed into the great crystal meeting hall and took a seat on their amber benches. King Melchizedek gave the signal to Alpha and Omega, the wisest of the number gnomes and all at once the cavern was lit to splendor, including a large beautiful pine tree adorned with beautiful lights and shapes from nature.

"Three of you have been called by our Creator to take the wisdom challenge, if you are one of these three please step forward." said the king.

Out of the corners of the hall came three gnomes, one was a boy gnome, and two young girl gnomes. The boy was William, a young gnome that proved wise for his age and the girls, Sariah and Hannah, were both born wise and very beautiful with long golden braids and vibrant green eyes. The three approached the king, walking brave and tall. The king looked very pleased for he knew these young gnomes well, they had been wonderful at tending the root babies and had shown great potential at knowing just where to gather the prettiest of stones.

"Are you three ready for your challenge?" asked the King.

"We are," said the three as they looked at one another with hope and faith.



“Then let us begin,” announced the King. “You can see our tree has many symbols from nature on it. Your first challenge is to bring me something from the mineral kingdom. It must be something that is a symbol of strength and stability.”

The king excused the three from the hall to start their challenge and the remaining gnomes finished their meeting by singing winter songs.

“In the Advent garden,
Dark the night below,
Earth is waiting, waiting, waiting,
For the stars to glow.”

William, Sariah and Hannah walked to the gnome kingdom doorway and talked about what they were to find.

Sariah spoke first, “There are so many stones it could be! Chrysocolla is a great stone for strength but isn’t known for its stability.”

“Perhaps,” pondered William, “we should take a walk in the night air and that will help.” The girls agreed and they each stepped through the mushroom doorway into the night. The air was brisk and quiet. Only the owls could be heard and even they were low. It was the first night of advent, all the creatures of the Earth waited in anticipation for the Winter Solstice and the return of the sun. The days had grown so short and even though the first snow had just fallen, everyone in the forest seemed to look forward to the arrival of spring.

Hannah walked meditatively and then suddenly squealed with delight. Her happy sound could be heard all across the forest, even the trees groaned as their sleep was disturbed.

“What is it?” asked William. “Have you solved the mystery already?”

“Yes I think I have!” she shouted. Again the trees around her groaned as if to tell her to quiet down, but Hannah was a happy gnome, she was never calm, never quiet and the trees knew they would just have to wait until she went back to the mushroom doorway before they would get proper rest.

“Carnelian is a perfect stone. It clears negative energy and sorrows, it protects against fear and anger and it helps to stabilize energies...” she paused and said “My mother is always sending them to me to help me with my outbursts.”

The other two gnomes giggled. They both loved Hannah very much and knew that her outburst were part of who she was, she was just energetic and happy, like a butterfly jumping from task to task until she was done.

“Why don’t we meet near Hematite’s cave tomorrow and ask him for some guidance in mining carnelian so we can take it to the king at our next meeting?” asked Sariah. The three gnomes agreed and parted for the evening.

With that, I ended the first night’s story. The children were delighted that I used their names for the gnomes, I hadn’t done that before and they got all giggly and silly on their way to bed. Hannah tried so hard to stay and listen but of course she’s still so little so we let her walk around and play blocks while we curled up to the hearth. I am a lucky mother.

I also started the first week of our advent nature table. I wanted to put together a fun progression for the kids that went with our stories so each week when they come home from their dad's house they have something new to look forward to. Last week, it was completely bare, save a white cloth for snow and some of our favorite stones. Since the first week of the nature table represents the mineral week, I had a little fun and went to the candy store to find some rock candy – they loved it! I had it waiting on the nature table with some of our favorite crystal clusters and stones we had gathered in the fall.

Oh dear, I just looked at the clock, I do lose track of time at night when they are gone. I miss them so much. I guess I'll write this week's gnome adventure in tomorrow's entry. I think I'll knit and go to bed.

**Author's note: Advent can be tricky depending on if you want your advent to end the Sunday prior to Christmas or the Sunday prior to Yule (Winter Solstice) in this book, because of the blended family situation I am going to use Yule as the end point to show how easily it can be done, but will give examples of verses that can be used for both Christian and non Christian homes in the festivals section at the end of the book.*

Also, traditional advent has a wreath lighting as part of the weekly gathering, feel free to include this as well. I have omitted it for this book because I wanted to include other ideas that perhaps were not so well known.

Grandma's Sugar Cookies

1 cup shortening
2 cups sugar
2 eggs
1 cup buttermilk
4-5 cups+ flour
½ tsp. salt
1 tsp. baking soda
2 tsp. baking powder



Cream shortening, sugar and eggs. Add buttermilk. Sift salt, baking soda and baking powder with 1 cup of the flour. Add to mixture. Add remaining flour. Mix until it can be worked by hand then roll out and cut or drop by the spoonful on a cookie sheet. Bake at 375 F for 10 minutes. Suitable for royal icing decoration.

Royal Icing

3 TBL meringue powder
4 cups powdered sugar
6 TBL warm water
1 tsp of flavoring

Beat until you get peaks, five plus minutes depending on your mixer. Thicken or thin for proper consistency to decorate sugar cookies. Dries hard.

December 2

I tend to run and run when the kids are gone, getting work done so I can play more when they are home. It was so late last night when I crawled into bed even Food TV had infomercials on it! I do think I am very lucky to have the alone time to recharge each week, between that and getting up at 5 a.m. I feel like I get the inner work time I need – it's a good thing too, I've got stories to brew! This week my meditations for advent have focused more on the Steiner lecture I have been enjoying (*Signs and Symbols of the Christmas Festival*). The imagery is amazing. I feel so blessed to have resources like the Steiner archives to grab the lectures for free when I have extra reading time.

I have been pondering this verse by Steiner:

*Deep in the ground of the human soul,
Of victory assured,
The Spirit-Sun is living,
All through the winter of the inner life
The faithful heart divines it.*



Now on to my next gnome story!

The Gnome's Yule Tide Advent Mystery Part 2

The chosen gnomes were so proud of their discovery for the first part of the mystery. William, Sariah and Hannah sat outside Hematite's cave waiting for an appointment with him. They wanted to ask him for help in mining some carnelian for the king. Carnelian is known for strength and stability in the mineral world and the chosen were certain Hematite would know what to do. Hematite was an odd looking gnome, his eyes seemed to be made of crystal, he was always good at finding the best minerals and knowing how to lovingly take only what the gnomes needed from Mother Earth, only their portion, and leaving the rest for others to find. He was very good at his job and the gnome king had looked very favorably on him for it.

After waiting a while the three heard a familiar sound:

“With clang and clash in caverns cold
We gather glittering, gleaming gold.
With ding and dong in dark and deep
We search where silver secrets sleep.
With hey and ho in hundred homes
We mine the mountains' magic stones.”

Just as he finished his little chant, Hematite turned the corner, startled by the three young gnomes, he hopped and let out a little yelp.

“What can I do for you?” he asked.

“We were wondering if you could help us with the king's challenge?” Sariah said.

“You must have figured out the king's riddle,” Hematite said with a wink. “I helped him write that part!”

“We have,” said Hannah, “it is carnelian, but we don’t know the best place to find such a wonderful stone of strength and stability. Can you help us?”

Hematite looked at the young gnomes for a while. “I’ll do more than that.” He said as he walked the gnomes deep into his cave. He reached above his hearth and there he had a lovely piece of carnelian, it was a beautiful almost red color, like the center of a ruby red grapefruit. “Take this to the gnome king,” he said “it will be a perfect addition to the great crystal hall.”

Sariah kissed Hematite on the cheek and thanked him. The three gnomes took great care of the piece until the next advent meeting. Before long the day arrived and they each dressed in their finest robes for the advent meeting.

Knock, knock, knock went King Melchizedek’s gavel and the excited gnome came to order. The three chosen sat near the front and approached the king when prompted.

“Have you solved the first mystery my young gnomes?” he asked.

“We have,” remarked William “a stone that is both strong and stable is carnelian.” William said as Hannah and Sariah curtsied and passed the stone to the king. The king examined the stone and then walked over to a nearby table that was covered in a beautiful white silk to mark the falling snow and placed the stone in the center of the table.

“Well done!” exclaimed the gnome king. “You are ready for your second challenge. For this second part, you must bring me something from the plant world that is a symbol of great growth, strength and is changeable.”

The chosen three were excited with their new task. They were excused from the great hall to begin their work. As they departed, the rest of the gnomes chanted a winter verse together in preparation for a visit from the great Saint Nicholas.

“Upon his snow white steed
With wind and lightning speed
St. Nicholas leaves the sky
And comes a riding by.”

The gnomes found themselves walking to the mushroom doorway again to get some night air to help them with the challenge.

“There are so many plants that could fit this riddle” said William as the three strolled in the moonlight.

“Sunflower... mandrake...carrot...oh fiddle dee dee,” said Sariah, “there are so many possibilities. We all tended root babies, what do you think it could be Hannah?”

Hannah was pacing the forest floor mumbling... “growth, strength, changeability...”

This time it was William to burst forth... “I know what it is! It can’t be just a flower or vegetable, it has to be a tree!” Just as he shouted, the trees groaned for him too. Would there be no peace until this challenge is over the Mighty Oak thought to himself?

“All plants grow,” William continued, “they all have a cycle, some flower in spring and die off in the autumn, some flower in early winter, few flowers stay alive all year long, some die completely and give themselves to the earth to be born again as something else, others come back in the new year, some are even strong, but trees... trees are strong, so many gnomes and humans build with them, they also show a great deal of growth, even when entire forests are burned, trees find a way to adapt and grow, and they are changeable, they stay alive all year, only their leaves and flowers fall off, the tree continues to be alive, even now, I hear them groan as they sleep.”

Sariah and Hannah congratulated William and started thinking about what they could take to the king for the nature table in the crystal hall. Of course a full grown tree would be too big for them. They decided that a trip to visit the queen was in order, for she is none other than Mother Earth herself. She is so sacred that she is rarely spoken to, but the three wise gnomes knew she would know just what to bring her husband, King Melchizedek. The gnomes went deep into the gnome caverns where they knew the great Mother would be resting and quietly knocked at her door.

“Come in my children,” called the queen. “What brings you so deep within the Earth?”

“Well,” began Hannah “we are the chosen gnomes and we are working on the second part of the mystery. We decided that the answer was a tree, but we wondered just how we could bring something so large to the king.”

“Oh my dears, I know just who you are, for I have been watching, silently watching...” began the queen, “take this token to my husband, he will be pleased.” And with that the Mother handed the gnomes a tiny sapling, it was just out of infancy and ready to take shape with the coming spring. “I appoint you three to watch over this sapling and to make sure it gains a proper place in the forest in the coming months.”

“Oh thank you great mother!” they all said at once as they quietly left the cavern to let the great mother continue to rest.

They all knew the gnome king would be impressed with their finding. Sariah agreed to take the sapling home and look after it until the next Advent meeting.

They will love this week’s story, of course they will also want to hear what our dear Tiptoes Lightly is up to with her adventures in *The Festival of Stones* – I just love telling them stories. They all seem to really eat it up, even Hannah, she is just along for the ride but I am so blessed to have the knowledge and testimony of Steiner – just knowing that she is doing all she should be by enjoying life right alongside the rest of us. She is so balanced and so full of life – I decided everyone needs a toddler to keep them on their toes! I had forgotten just how much work having a little one can be. I do think that if she wasn’t with William and Sariah that she would never stay with Jack alone, she loves her daddy but I know she misses me. When she gets home she won’t leave my side and many weeks she wants to return home before their visit is over, thankfully Jack is good about realizing that it is her age.

The nature table is all ready for week two, I found a perfect little live pine tree while shopping today that is the perfect size – so that sits on the table as do a few other things representing the plant kingdom. I am also making a delicious cake today that I remember my mother making when I was a child in Germany, I decided that I would add some Nutella to the cream frosting and make some little mushrooms from marzipan and make the whole thing look like a log! They will be so impressed with their mother.

Oh and the dolls! I am so close to being finished. Thank goodness I still have a few days before St. Nick arrives. Jack told me today that he would buy William’s gift so I think we are in business, I am excited, I love to watch the children this time of year.

December 2 later in the day

My cake is done, my story is all ready and I sit waiting for my little angels to come home, I miss them so much.

Yule Log and Mushroom Cake

Any simple jelly roll cake will do, even an angel cake, but this recipe is good because the filling really turns the cake into more of a pudding and it is so yummy!

Spray and line a jelly roll pan with parchment, then spray the parchment. You can use any type of flavoring for this cake, I like almond and that is what Martha Stewart recommends in her original but I have changed it a bit to reflect the cake I remember from my childhood and also use other flavorings from time to time depending on the occasion. I use this recipe several times a year.

Base cake recipe:

4 large eggs, separated into yolks and whites
 $\frac{3}{4}$ cup of sugar
 $\frac{1}{4}$ tsp. of flavoring
 $\frac{1}{2}$ cup flour (I have used all purpose as well as whole wheat pastry)
 $\frac{1}{4}$ tsp. salt
Powdered sugar for dusting the finished cake

Preheat oven at 350 degrees. Whisk together yolks, $\frac{1}{4}$ cup sugar and flavoring and set aside. Beat whites and salt to soft peak stage, continue to beat and add in the remaining sugar, beat until stiff and glossy (and yummy!) Whisk a bit of the yoke mixture into the whites and then fold the rest together by hand until blended. Spread in pan and bake for about 15 minutes until cake springs back in pan. Remove from oven and sprinkle with powdered sugar, invert onto a new piece of parchment. Carefully peel off the old parchment and begin to roll up the cake along with the clean paper. Roll it into a log and cool it for about 20 minutes, up to an hour before filling.

Filling and Frosting:

As a child my mother would make a simple whipped cream filling and at times add canned mandarin oranges to the cream and to decorate. I also like to add about $\frac{1}{3}$ of a cup of Nutella hazelnut spread to give it a chocolaty taste and the brown needed to look like a log. For the Yule log I made mushrooms from marzipan and dusted them with unsweetened cocoa to make them look real, I put slivered almonds on top of the cake to make it look like a log and put the mushrooms all around.

December 4

What a wonderful time we had with our Advent celebration the other night! The children had a ball. William is really getting into the gnome story while the girls were very impressed with my cake. I've really been meditating on that triangle and what it means to me. I feel such strong spiritual growth in me over the last few months and I feel blessed to have both Rachel and Raine to talk to about it, however I don't think either of their directions are quite where I am meant to go. Rachel is so wonderful to teach us about Chanukah and her traditions and we may even partake a bit this year and Raine is pretty grounded in her Paganism which I love and see all the beauty in it, but I think I am not ready and may never be to leave the Christianity of my youth, although it is taking on a much different look that it ever has for me. There is so much more to the mysteries of life and I am ready to let my spirit self guide my ego more than it ever has before, and I am excited to see just where it

takes me. With William having studies in ancient cultures over the next few years I can see just how much fun Waldorf will be for us as we discover new territory.

I found some great verses for us to use this week in our circle. Since we aren't doing a traditional Advent wreath lighting this year, I opted to use some of those verses in our morning circle. This one is from my favorite little Wynstones book *Winter*.



*Winter is dark,
Yet each tiny spark
Brightens the way
To Christmas Day.*

*Shine little light
And show us the way
To the bright light
Of Christmas Day.
~ H. St. John*

I honestly don't know what I would do without the little books I have collected over the years. I know that some Waldorf homeschooling moms really stress about big expensive put-together packages of stuff and monthly guides, but so much of my fun on this journey has been the discovery of new resources. I have learned to really pray and meditate about what I buy and each time I get a chance to spend some extra money on supplies I am always blessed to find just what I need.

Kids will be up soon. I think today we'll really start baking, I may pull the microwave out of its pantry hiding place and make some divinity! That sounds so yummy as I look outside and see the snow already beginning to fall. It is early this year.

I finished the dolls this morning! They are all ready to sit next to Sariah and Hannah's boots tomorrow night for St. Nick. I can't wait to see the looks on their faces – they have not caught sight of me working on them at all so this will be a huge surprise and they will not for a moment think it was me! Between the dolls and William's castle I think St. Nick will be a hit.

Well, I hear Miss Hannah stirring so I guess my time is up. How thankful I am for the time I get!

December 5

Well tonight is the night! They are all buzzing about this morning getting the house all ready for St. Nick's visit. Yesterday, we made divinity and today we'll roll out some cookies from the dough I have left in the freezer, I have a great St. Nick cookie cutter and then kids also hunted in the drawer and found a carrot shaped one from last Easter to make carrot cookies for St. Nick's horse! They are so silly. I thought I'd quickly write down the verses I found and my recipe for the divinity.

These are both traditional verses from Germany that I found in Wynstones *Winter*

The first one:

*Kind old man, St. Nicholas dear,
Come to our house this year.
Here's some straw and here's some hay
For your little donkey grey.*

*Pray put something in my shoe,
I've been good the whole year through,
Kind old man, St. Nicholas dear,
Come to our house this year.*

And the second one:

*Upon his snow white steed
With wind and lightening speed
St. Nicholas leave the sky
And comes a riding by.*

*The little hare hops nigh
And lifts his nose up high.
The stag, with pointing horn,
Jumps over bush and thorn.*

*And all creatures dear
Are drawing quickly near.
Before St. Nicholas bow,
Their little heads so low.*

*And we will learn a tune,
Of sun and star and moon,
And sing our happy lay,
Sing on St. Nicholas' day.*



Microwave Divinity

2 cups sugar
1/3 cup water
1/3 cup light corn syrup
1/4 tsp. salt
2 egg whites
1 tsp vanilla (or other flavoring)

Combine sugar, water, syrup and salt in a 2 quart casserole or bowl, cover, microwave on high for 5 minutes. Stir. Microwave uncovered for 4 to 6 minutes or until water bounces

into hard balls. Cool 3 to 4 minutes, meanwhile beat egg whites until stiff, pour sugar mixture in a steady stream over eggs while beating until it holds shape and loses a bit of gloss. Stir in flavor. Drop by the spoonful onto wax or parchment paper.

We have put chocolate chips in ours as well as crushed up candy canes and other fun seasonal things for variety.

Well I think they are ready for me to mop so I better cut this short. Tomorrow's entry will be fun!

December 6

We had such a wonderful relaxing day. Jack got here before the kids got up and over a cup of tea we discussed the rest of the month, that was helpful, he even gave me a little extra money to get our school supplies for the new year. All of the divinity that the children had left out for St. Nick had to be eaten, no easy feat since the children were all convinced that he would need a ton of sugar to keep him full of energy for his trip, no matter how many times we discussed his need for protein too! Before we knew it Sariah stumbled out of bed and was excited to see her daddy there but even more excited when she realized he was there to watch her open her gifts. She quickly woke the other two. The girls loved their dolls and are off playing with them now – William has been so quiet I had to check on him to make sure he hadn't gone back to bed! He's in his room building a kingdom with his new set. The snow is falling, everyone is happy and I think all might be right with the world! I decided we would read from Jakob Streit's book *Saint Nicholas* today and paint together – but for now they can just play and I am going to sit here curled up in this chair, enjoy the falling snow and start knitting myself a new hat with this yummy organic cotton Lion Brand yarn I found.

Perfect Beanie Hat

Yarn in the weight you want and circular needles to match – I used 20 inch ones to start with and then moved it to a smaller set when I start decreasing to make it easier.

Cast on enough for your head... depending on the size of your yarn, my yarn is bulky and I used #9 circular needles and cast on about 65 stitches.

After you join your stitches (be careful not to twist them), knit 1, purl 1 to the end of the row. Work that same row for 4 more rows, giving you a nice ribbing for the bottom of your hat. Then knit every round until it measure 5 to 6 inches, depending on how far down you want it to come over your head, I like mine to cover my ears and the back of my neck during winter, shorter for summer. Remember that the decreases will add another couple inches to the hat as well.

Next row will start decreasing, knit 2 and then knit 2 together, repeat this to the end of the row. Knit 5 more rows.

Next row decrease again, knit 2 and knit 2 together, repeat to the end of the row. Knit 3 rows.

Knit 1 and knit 2 together, repeat to the end of the row. Knit 2 rows. Last row, knit 2 together to end of the row. Cut a long tail and then thread a yarn needle, gather up the stitches and tie a good knot and then weave in your ends.

I found a great verse for the snow too... from Wynstones *Winter* of course!

*Snowflakes so light,
Snowflakes so bright,
Cover the earth
And make it white.
~ I. Tupaj*

Well I better knit and start spinning this week's gnome story...

I am beautiful. I am bountiful. I am blissful.

December 8

I am still finding the Steiner lecture I was reading to be a great source of strength for me this season. I did stumble onto something else that is just priceless, it is the concept of the seven fold being. I found it in a wonderful book I just started called *Homemaking as a Social Art* by Veronika van Duin. She describes the attributes or the desires of the seven fold being as follows:

1. Aim for good physical health.
2. Recognizing our place in the human race, we are all equal.
3. Realizing that thoughts touch us as much as actions.
4. Acknowledging oneself as a valid and effective individual spirit. Self confidence grows with the knowledge of self.
5. Adhering to resolutions make until a new one is made or needed.
6. Experiencing gratitude for all living things, for life and the world around us.
7. Recognizing that all of this enriches the spirit.

What a fabulous read, I am really enjoying it. I wish I had more time! Alas, I did have a new gnome story to weave.

The Gnome's Yule Tide Advent Mystery Part 3

Knock, knock, knock went the gavel of King Melchizedek and all the gnomes came to order. They all noticed a familiar visitor in the great cavern – St. Nicholas! He often came to rest with the gnomes after his journey around the world. The three chosen sat near the front and when prompted, came to stand before the king.

“Your highness,” began William, “we have brought you the symbol from the plant world that is strong, changeable and full of growth.” He handed the king the small pot containing the sapling they had all cared for over the last week.

King Melchizedek was so pleased with the young gnomes. He turned to St. Nicholas and saw the smile on his face as well

“I see you have been to see our Mother,” said the king. “I trust she is resting comfortably.”

“She is,” said Sariah “she was kind enough to give us this sapling to care for until the spring comes and it is ready to be planted in the ground.”

The king took the beautiful sapling and placed it on the table near the stones and then turned back to the gnomes.

“Your next task is a bit harder. This time you must find something from the animal world. This again must be strong but also have the ability to give life and food from the same source. Good luck my young gnomes. You have nearly completed all your tasks.” With that the King turned to the rest of the gnomes and broke out in song.

“In the Christmas garden,
Where we singing go,
Life is glowing, flowing, glowing,
Red the roses grow.”

The three wise gnomes were tired and decided they would meet at the mushroom doorway to start the new riddle the next day.

Thank goodness for Wynstones Press! It is hard enough to spin stories, thankfully the verses the gnomes tell can easily come from the season books, I have found *Winter* to be such a great resource to me.

I think I'll needle felt some little animals for our nature table this week. I've been adding a manger scene too. I just love this time of the year – there are so many possibilities so much I could do and even doing one tenth of it still makes me feel wonderful! Rachel emailed me her list of activities for Chanukah and wow she will be busier than I am trying to keep up with them and some of the other festival activities. She is such a great influence on me and I do love that she includes me on her journey of faith. I am hoping to be able to step in and do some of the activities she mentions. She also sent me a great Jewish website chabad.org that I found to be a great resource for many of the questions I often have about the Jewish religion.



1. Day One - Tzedakah (give to charity) - light 1 candle, recite 3 blessings, make potato latkes. Story idea: "Maccabees & the First Chanukkah"
2. Day Two - Tzedakah, light 2 candles, recite blessings, make apple fritters. Story idea: "Hannah the Joyful"
3. Day Three - Tzedakah, light 3 candles, recite blessings, make sufganiyot. Story idea: "Judith the Warrior"
4. Day Four - *Shabbat* Tzedakah, light 4 candles, recite blessings (before Shabbat begins) then light Shabbat candles, recite blessings. Festive Shabbat meal and challah. Story idea: "Hanukkah Moon"
5. Day Five - Tzedakah, light 5 candles, recite blessings, make apple latkes. Story idea: "Zlateh the Goat"
6. Day Six - Tzedakah, light 6 candles, recite blessings, make star of David cookies with cream cheese frosting. Story idea: "Hershel and the Hanukkah Goblins"
7. Day Seven - Tzedakah, light 7 candles, recite blessings, make gingerbread dreidel. Story idea: "Runaway Dreidel"
8. Day Eight - Light 8 candles, recite blessings, make cupcake menorah. Gather donations for charity and deliver them. Story idea: "When Mindy Saved Hanukkah"

December 10

We have been so busy... doing nothing! Ok, so we have been exploring the season by sledding and painting winter scenes, sitting by the fire sipping cocoa and of course we've been baking. We decided to bake two new things each week...those size 8 pants are likely going to haunt my closet another season – there is no way my hiney will fit in them now! Oh well, I love myself, I am happy and vibrant and enjoying every bite of every cookie I sink my teeth into. I'll just go without the milk!

I started planning our Saint Lucy day, Raine expressed interest in joining in the fun, so we are going to grab a bite later today and get it planned.

December 10 later in the day

Raine took me to the best little restaurant, so yummy and healthy – it looked like a shack but it was great! We decided that we'd put together the supplies for the girls to make wreath crowns from paper and the boys to make the dunce-like pointy caps for our celebration. I will make the saffron buns and she'll provide some cider or cocoa for them to drink. She wanted to take a twist on the celebration and I agreed – she is really wanting to get her children serving each other since the girls will be doing the traditional serving of the meal, the boys will do the clean up! I had a laugh over that one but thought it was a great idea to get them in the service of one another.

I hunted the Internet and found this great recipe from cooks.com

St. Lucia buns

2 pkg. active dry yeast
 1/2 c. warm (105 to 115 degrees) water
 1/2 tsp. ground or powdered saffron

2 c. milk, scalded and cooled
1 c. sugar
1 1/2 tsp. salt
3 eggs, slightly beaten
8 to 9 c. all-purpose flour
1/2 c. melted butter
1 egg yolk, beaten, for glaze
1/3 c. raisins for decoration

Dissolve yeast in warm water, stir in saffron and milk, sugar, salt, eggs, and half the flour. Beat vigorously. Add melted butter. Slowly add remaining flour, mixing until stiff dough forms. Turn out onto lightly floured board; let rest 15 minutes.

Knead 10 minutes or until dough is smooth and satiny. Place in lightly greased mixing bowl. Cover and let rise in warm (85 degree) place until doubled, about 1 hour. Punch down, let rise again. Punch down and divide dough into quarters.

Divide each quarter into 12 parts. Shape into strands, 12 inches long. Coil ends to make different shapes. Brush with beaten egg yolk. Stick a raisin into each coil. Cover. Let rise until almost double, 30 minutes. Bake at 375 F for 15 to 20 minutes or until lightly golden. Serve warm. 4 dozen.

Preparation time: 40 minutes; rising time: 2 hours

December 13

Our celebration was great! The more I researched the festival, the more surprised I was that it was Raine I was celebrating it with and not Rachel. Raine is probably the most open minded Pagan I know – she is very willing to teach her children all faiths and I do adore that in her. The festival was beautiful. The children and I spent yesterday making our rolls so they would be all ready for today, they turned out beautifully. When our guests arrived today, the kids all set out to make their hats, the boys wore pointy star-boy hats while the girls wore the traditional candle wreaths on their heads. Then we told a story of Saint Lucy and the girls served us all. I was fresh out of white robes, but the white silks we had went nicely with the girls dressed in white. Raine's girls with my two were just perfect little angelic figures walking the house serving us all.

Saint Lucy's Story (appropriate for all ages)

There once was a girl named Lucia that lived in a far away land. Her father loved and served God and her mother was a non-believer. When Lucy was young, her father passed away and Lucy decided that in his memory she would devote her life to serving the God that her father loved so dearly. When she was old enough, her mother begged her to marry a wealthy man, a non



believer – Lucy knew she could not do this, she did not want to dishonor her father so she went on serving God and refused to marry. It is said that she is also the goddess or patron saint of famine, people in many different lands pray to her when they have trouble with their crops. She is often seen in a dress of pure white symbolizing purity, with a red sash, symbolizing the blood shed by Christ, and wearing a crown of lights – these lights are another step in the light that comes at the middle of winter with the solstice – Lucy’s crown is a beacon in the darkness of winter.

The boys cheerfully cleaned up and we have had a wonderful afternoon drawing many pictures of Saint Lucy. I really enjoy Raine, she is a light in my life. While she was here we started to plan a gathering for a winter solstice spiral garden. I am blessed to have such good friends.

December 15

More baking! I seriously don’t know how my pants will fit but we are having so much fun. The snow has been falling and we are enjoying ourselves baking and knitting. I knit myself a scarf to go with my hat, they are so cute – of course now the girls are bugging me for a matching set, maybe I can start now and have them done for Three Kings, with the solstice so close I just don’t know if I could get them done... maybe I could. We’ll have to see what this week brings.

We found a great little song that a friend taught us, Hannah just loves it – it is so perfect with all the falling snow.

Once There Was a Snowman by Moïse Renstrom

*Once there was a snowman, snowman, snowman,
Once there was a snowman, tall, tall, tall.
In the sun he melted, melted, melted.
In the sun he melted, small, small, small.*

Time for me to think about the gnomes again...

The Gnome’s Yule Tide Advent Mystery Part 4

Hannah was the first to get to the mushroom doorway on that bright winter morning. She saw the hens roaming free in the forest and got some corn from a bag in the doorway and started to throw it out for them. Soon after the other two gnomes came and started doing the same. They silently fed the hens for a while and then Sariah started talking.

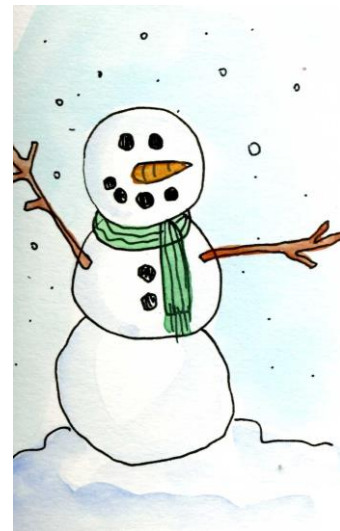
“I have been thinking about this challenge the whole night and I am stuck.”

The other two gnomes nodded in deep thought. They continued to feed the hens when Daisy, a friendly fat barred rock hen, came by to get some corn.

“Cluck, what’s wrong, cluck, cluck?” asked Daisy.

“We are the chosen gnomes this year, and we are stuck on one of the king’s riddles,” said William.

“Cluck, what’s the riddle?”



William almost didn't tell her, for he knew hens could be clever but he wasn't sure she could help.

"The king asked us to look for something in the animal kingdom that is strong and can give life and food, there is nothing like that – I thought of a cow but I don't think that is it," William explained.

Daisy chuckled and clucked. "Follow me," she said to the gnomes.

The three gnomes were curious now and all began to follow her. She led them back to her nest that was in the branches of a mighty fir tree. "Here," she said as she gestured to Sariah to take an egg.

"But this is an egg, your egg, don't you need it?" questioned Hannah.

"Oh dear me, I lay so many eggs each year, if they all hatched I would not know what to do with myself! I have always freely given my eggs to the gnome kingdom as you have all been so good to take care of us and let us roam free in the forest. Red, my rooster, helps me with the ones we plan to hatch, the others would simply go to waste," said Daisy.

The three gnomes realized Daisy was more clever than they had thought, she gave them something with a strong outer shell and inside was the potential for life or for food. She also gave them one of her feathers to put on the nature table.

"From this," Daisy pointed at the egg "comes this." Daisy point to the feather. "Cluck, hens lay a strong shell that gives both life and food. Give my best to the king." Daisy said.

With that the three young gnomes ran back to the mushroom doorway. William agreed to keep the egg in a cold place until the next meeting, Hannah took the feather and agreed to care for it.

Knock, knock, knock went the king's gavel. The king was calling the next meeting to order and the gnomes all took their places. When it was time, the chosen three came forward.

"What have you brought us of the animal world?" asked King Melchizedek.

"Oh kind and dear king, we have brought you a treasure from the animal world," said Hannah as she placed the egg in the hands of the king. "It is strong and was given freely by the hen Daisy as a symbol of both life and food. She also was kind enough to give us one of her feathers for our nature table."

King Melchizedek was so pleased – he knew they were near the end of their tasks. "Well done!" he said beaming from ear to ear (under his beard of course!)

"Young gnomes, your final mystery to solve is one that will test your wit and wisdom and is the key to peace in all the earth, both below in our kingdom and above where the humans live. We will meet again under the sky for the solstice celebration. Have the mystery solved by then. For now, dance and enjoy yourselves! It is the last week of Advent!"

With that all the gnomes cheered and began their party.

December 18

The children loved the story of where the gnomes are now, they are all anxious for the last installment. I am proud to be able to write that I was able to get one hat done and part of another by getting much bigger knitting needles and bulkier yarn so I'll have to pick up more of it. I think I'll have these all ready for the solstice. Speaking of the solstice, Jack is coming here again – I am glad for the kids but I hope we are not confusing them at the same time. Poor Hannah doesn't understand why he can be here when she wakes but then is gone

again, she calls for him in her sleep. I so wish these children didn't have to live through this pain, it isn't their fault that Jack and I couldn't make it work as a couple, heaven knows we tried.

To ease my brain, I have been back to reading Steiner again – such freedom comes from letting go of the resistance and giving it all up. Between Steiner and Dr. Wayne Dyer I think I might remain sane for another day.

About the solstice Steiner wrote:

*Deep in the ground of the human soul,
Of victory assured,
The Spirit-Sun is living.
All through the winter of the inner life
The faithful heart divines it.*



It was so powerful that I was moved to write my own:

*Stir up your light O Lord and come; rescue us through your great strength so that salvation, which is hindered by our egos, may be hastened by your grace. You are the light which shineth in the darkness and the darkness comprehendeth it not.
Amen.*

I guess not knowing just where I stand spiritually is okay for me right now. I do know that I believe in something greater, in a Universe that cares for me and sings when I am full of gratitude and grace, I do think we must have two heavenly parents – beyond that I think I will just remain a student – one of life, one of hope and one of love.

December 19

Tonight is our spiral garden and we are so excited! There is a fresh blanket of snow in our yard. William and Sariah took turns with the shovel making a wonderful path for our walk tonight. Hannah and I clipped branches from the fir tree and decorated it with popcorn strands after to make the birds happy. Afterward, we put the clipped branches around our spiral, made sure our baking was finished and then we hopped in the car and ran off to find a tree! We usually go on the solstice but I feared they would all be gone. We found one that was just perfect and spent the afternoon decorating it. The kids are putting the finishing touches on it now, our baking is all ready, the candles light the way for the spiral outside – everyone will be here in an hour and all is right with the world. Raine and Rachel are both bringing their families, Jack said he would come and even Dad – I hadn't heard from him in months and in true form he called and wanted to come visit. He said he would welcome the time with the kids as well as a time to connect with the season a bit more – we'll see. Until tomorrow – one more gnome story to conjure up and some gnomes to make for the human week on our nature table.

December 20

My eyes are not working yet... I have been awake for three hours and they just refuse to cooperate! I am beat. Christmas is coming and the kids will be with Jack so I figure I will sleep then, catch up, get rested. Last night was fabulous – Rachel read a great little story from the Wynstones *Winter* book, the children loved the spiral snacks (spiral cookies and spiral roll ups we made from the tortillas and a bit of Nutella and of course hot cocoa. We also mixed in a bit from the *Festival of Stones* by Reg Down. We had each child bring a rock that they wanted to part with and put it in a basket at the center of the spiral, at the end of the evening they chose a different rock to take home with them – this was a huge hit too. We took the little ones through the spiral, softly praying as we went, we lit our candle from the others there, deposited our stone and walked back out, it was so magical out in the snow. It was such an enjoyable evening. This morning, even though I am tired, it has been fun too. I was able to get the hats done – even one for William! They were all happy to have new hats to match their coats and I thought I would work on the scarves for Three Kings. I gave the children gifts this morning in honor of the solstice since they'll be with Jack later this week for Christmas. They were all excited and are off playing – William with new Legos and the girls are enjoying some treasures I found for the toy kitchen. I am so thankful for all the great Waldorf toy stores I can find on the Internet.

Our prayer from last night, from Steiner:

*Now the heart's spring of hope beholds
The sun, His coming glory
In this light of blessing
Token of the highest life
In winter's deepest night.*

I found a great little verse for our gnome story by I. Tupaj – I'll have to include it in tonight's conclusion.

The Gnome's Yule Tide Advent Mystery Part 5

It was the day before Yule and the chosen three were struggling to know the answer to the final riddle given to them by the king. Knowing the wisdom of the great Mother, the three went to visit her again. She would be awake today, getting ready for the solstice celebration – the three gnomes were sure that she could assist them. They all entered the Queen's cave in a reverent manner.

"Good morning my children," the Queen greeted them. "What can I help you with?"

"Oh great Mother" began Hannah "we have been trying to solve the last riddle and we have had no luck, tomorrow is the solstice and we have nothing to bring to the king."

"Young and wise gnomes," began the Queen "did you think to pray?"

The three gnomes shook their heads in shame. "Well then," said the Queen "I think you have your answer."

The gnomes left the Queens cave and headed to the mushroom doorway. They knew there was a special grove in the trees where they should go to offer up a prayer to the Creator. Once there, William offered up the prayer, asking the Creator to help them to answer the last riddle. Suddenly there was a bright light and a song from the heavens.

Angels sang:

*“Seven angels at the door of heaven,
Light and bright.
Seven angels at the door of heaven,
Holding a light.
Open your heart to the light so bright,
Open your heart to the angels in white.”*

The gnomes looked toward the heavens and one of the angels spoke:

“You have done a wonderful thing coming to the Creator for help. The answer you seek is near. Come with us and we will show you a great vision.”

Silently the three gnomes followed the angels. They beheld a beautiful young woman and cradled in her arms a baby. An angel said:

“Behold, this child is capable of great things, he is known as the Prince of Peace, the Messiah, the Son, the Sun, he is born in the dark of the shortest night, he is love, some call him Horus, some Jesus, he has many names. Your king Melchizedek will know him as the Anointed One.”

Suddenly the gnomes were back in the grove of trees and the angels were gone. Sariah searched her bag for a drawing pad and pencils, she quickly sketched what they had seen. She made a beautiful picture of the mother and child for the king and wrote on it “The Anointed One.”

The gnomes were silent for the remainder of the day, meditating on what they had seen. They agreed to meet by the mushroom doorway before the solstice celebration.

The air was cold as the gnomes from the entire gnome kingdom filed into the forest, hundreds of gnomes – number gnomes, root gnomes, mining gnomes, carpentry gnomes, animal gnomes and many more. King Melchizedek stood on the high rock and knocked the ground three times with his cane for them to all come to order. Next to him stood the queen, the great Mother Earth herself, dressed white as the driven snow with long hair, black as the night. The gnomes all came to order.

“Where are the chosen ones?” asked the king

“We are here your Highness,” answered William, Sariah, and Hannah from the back of the crowd.

All at once the sea of gnomes parted and the three stepped forward. There was confusion among the gnomes as all the three carried with them was a piece of paper that appeared to be in a beautifully crafted wooden frame.

The king addressed the young gnomes “Have you found for me a symbol from the human world that can bring peace to all?”

“We have,” said Sariah as she presented the king with the frame. “Your Highness, we were very troubled by this challenge and it took much pondering and eventual prayer for us to find the answer. We were certain we could do this challenge on our own but we found that once we allowed the Creator to help us then we were given a great gift. The gift of a vision from angels.” She turned to Hannah.

“In the vision we saw something wonderful. We beheld a woman fair holding a child. The angel told us that the child was known by many names but that you would know him as The Anointed One. We were told that the child had the ability to bring peace to all if only they would allow it.” Hannah said.

“Well done, well done!” boasted the king, he was so proud of his gnomes. “You have completed the challenge.”

The crowd parted again as another king stepped into the moonlight. It was King Equals, ruler over the number gnomes. He was dressed in white with a golden crown and a gold equals sign on his cape.

“You gnomes have been chosen by the Creator to move forward into the sacred world of numbers,” started Equals. “I would be honored if you would come to my kingdom and train with my gnomes.”

The three gnomes danced with glee and accepted the invitation. All at once the solstice party began and the forest floor was alive with merriment. Just before sunrise the gnomes gathered together once more to watch together the dawn of the new season, the birth of the Sun.

The End.

What a blessing the sun is today. I have so much hope for this next season.

I found this wonderful poem by Herbert Hahn that warms me today:

*Hush, hush, this Holy Night
Angels have brought the Child of Light;
All humankind shall gently bear him,
All the beasts shall nestle near him,
All the flowers shall adore him,
All the stones shall kneel before him,
All the world shall honor him,
All, all, even Cherubim and Seraphim.*

Well, I have a cake to make in honor of the sun so I better get moving – with all the baking we did yesterday, I opted to let Betty Crocker help me out this morning. I will be baking a yellow cake mix, filling and frosting it with whipped cream and topping it with lemon pudding. Yum!

Spiral Cookies (adapted from a recipe I found in *Circle Round* by Starhawk, Diane Baker, and Anne Hill)

1 cup or 2 sticks of butter
1 ½ cups sugar
2 eggs
1 tsp. vanilla
3 ½ cups flour
1 tsp. baking soda
1/8 tsp. salt
2 ounces milk or semi sweet chocolate

Preheat oven to 350 degrees Fahrenheit. Cream together butter, sugar and eggs. Add vanilla. Sift together flour, baking soda and salt, gradually add to wet ingredients. Split dough in half. Melt chocolate and add it to half the dough. Roll out both pieces of dough to about 1/8 inch in thickness and lay one on top the other. Roll the pieces of dough together into a spiral, wrap in parchment and chill for at least an hour. Once firm, slice into rounds about

¼ inch thick, depending on how big you want your cookies. Bake for 12 to 14 minutes. Makes 10 dozen – a great size to share!

December 24

Here it is Christmas Eve. The kids have already left for Jack's house and I am a sulking mess. I told myself I wouldn't be and really tomorrow is just a day right? And I will be with them while they open their gifts at his house – but still I mourn. What do I mourn? Not my marriage, I know that was a relationship that needed to move on – I guess maybe it is the idea of the change. Someone once told me that losing the dream was far harder than losing the reality. I think she is right. The dream. I know I am a good mother, some days I am a great mother, today I was a great mother. We baked a birthday cake in honor of Jesus, I used my jelly roll recipe and put canned mandarin oranges on it like I remember my mother making as a child, we sang, enjoyed the snow and the sunshine – and then they left with their dad. He offered for me to spend the night – the nerve, I know where he was going with that! Haha – as if that would help matters! I am finally happy, finally healthy, I don't need that to muddy my waters.

I think I'll go take a bath and write more later.

December 24 later

I feel much better. I had a good cry...some good laughs and now I sit all curled up in the most comfy chair in the house without someone asking me to move or stealing my drink or needing a diaper change. I can just be. Life is good. Better than good, life is great. I love me. I am wonderful.

December 30

I have a date!!! This one actually looks promising too! I have dated some real losers since my divorce but this guy seems awesome. We met at the bookstore in the esoteric book section – he took me out the next night to dinner and actually asked if we could say a blessing over our food right there in the restaurant... I about fell over – he thought I was upset until I told him about William's desire to bless every meal even if we are out and Sariah wanting to pray before we go into the grocery store that we'll find good deals. He laughed. His name is Mark. We are the same age separated by a few months and he has never been married – gulp... but wants a family. He believes in what he calls an "eternal family" he promised to tell me more as we get to know each other. Tonight the children are with Jack and I am going out with Mark. The world is bright... maybe I found my Steiner???

January 5

What a whirlwind the last week has been. I have spent much of my free alone time with Mark, things are going well, he is so deep and caring and very safe – honorable is the word Grandpa would have used. He has yet to meet the children, I think I will wait another month or so.

We are getting ready for the Epiphany. Tomorrow we'll have a party with Raine. We spent today making a felt crown and cotton cape for the king. I helped Sariah trace out the pattern, she cut out the pieces and William sewed it together. Hannah had to get into it too, I found some sewing cards we made a few years back for Sariah and gave her a big plastic needle and she went to town "sewing." While they worked on their projects, I made a simple king's cape – I took a piece of beautiful tie dyed fabric that I had and made a casing for ribbon on one end, adorned it with some iron on patches I found in my sewing box and hemmed it all up – I am sure our king (or queen) will be pleased. Raine is bringing the cake with the coin hidden deep inside. The child to find the coin is the king (or queen) for the day, they'll get the cape and the crown.

Easy epiphany story

The three kings (or wizards) saw a star in the sky and had a vision of a child of light being born in a land far away. They were told in the vision that this child would be king and all should honor him and that they should make the journey to see the child and take with them three gifts. The gifts were ones traditionally given to kings symbolizing wealth, health and prosperity. Gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh.

Mark got me this wonderful gift, it is a little box that we plan to open at the end of our short story, the box contains real samples of the simple, yet sacred gifts.

I look toward the future and feel so blessed. I too have many simple, yet sacred gifts in my life.

Spring

Meet Elizabeth: She is a fairly conservative Christian mom that is new to Waldorf. Elizabeth is married to Luke and they have two children, Mary is four years old and Esther is two. Luke just finished a tour in Iraq.



February 1

I am on new ground here but excited. Folks at church keep warning me about Waldorf but I feel in my heart that it is the right path for us, I know I want to homeschool and this method feels like home to me. I was reading scriptures this morning and praying about our choices and I really felt the Spirit strongly encourage me to keep going on my path, these girls are so smart and would do great in preschool but that is just not what I want. Luke is looking at a job with a major airline and I want to be able to travel with the girls, we have gotten such a taste for it lately.

I asked Luke to pray with me about it and afterward he said he felt the Lord telling him to trust my judgment, so here we go... alone down the Waldorf homeschooling path. I found some great resources, including a writer online that I contacted with some of my fears. I understood that she used to be Pagan but is now Christian so I wanted to see what she had to say about the different aspects of the method. She said that she gets the same concerns about the method from Pagans as she does from Christians – Pagans think the method is Christian and Christians think it is Pagan! I had a good laugh about that. She also asked me if I was desiring to raise children who knew the world and how to be tolerant of other faiths – of course! I want to be a Christ-like woman and that is just what that means to me! She explained that giving the children the base of what we believe at home and peppering it with what others believe in the world gives the girls a safe place to ask questions. She also encouraged me to pray often for guidance... I have never been told that before with regards to schooling – I made an instant connection.

Our first “official” Waldorf festival is tomorrow on Groundhog Day! From now on it will be known to us as Candlemas. I did some research and was so amazed. I knew that many of

the Christian church holidays were based on old Pagan ones, yet I didn't know anything about this one. I stepped out of my comfort zone a bit and made up a story for the girls for tomorrow. I don't tell stories! I read them. The lady online encouraged me to go back to my childhood and remember some of the stories I used to come up with when I was a girl. I loved telling gnome stories. Even when Daddy would tell me I was silly for believing in such things I told them anyway.

I think I'll lay out our day like this:
Braided bread in honor of St. Brigid (or the Goddess Bridget) for breakfast
Gnome story
Painting about gnome story
Lunch
Rolling candles



Luke said he's excited to see how it all comes together for me. The online resources we found have been really helpful. I thought about dipping candles with the girls but then thought rolling them would be great the first time around, I found an easy kit at the craft store. Apparently the Roman Catholic church used to bless all their candles on this day so it falls nicely with the idea that St. Brigid or the Goddess Bridget is the saint of the flame. She is the light that signifies the first coming of spring. In some parts of the world the crocus and other early bulbs are beginning to bloom, the root babies are starting to wake up. Our Waldorf painting supplies came last week and we've been playing with them already so that will be fun and the bread will be easy since I have a great roll recipe that I use all the time for braided breads. I think we'll have a fun day.

The Gnomes and the Root Babies

Crocus and Tulip are two root gnomes. Their job is to watch the seasons and decide when it is time to help the root babies wake up, they do this with the help of Mother Earth's sister, Brigid. She is the keeper of the sacred well that comes from deep in the earth and also of the flame that helps everyone remember that spring is on it's way. Crocus and Tulip start waking the root babies in February. This year they have had a terrible time waking them up, each time they try, the root babies cry and turn over to get more sleep. The two gnomes decided to visit Brigid and see if she had any ideas that might help them. Brigid lives deep in the gnome caves during the dark of winter and it is very hard to find her cavern until it is time for her to wake. The gnomes looked and looked and could not find the opening, the caves were too dark and no light shined in such dark places.

"Something must be wrong," said Crocus. "What shall we do?"

"Perhaps we should go and visit Mother Earth, she'll know what to do," said Tulip, and they set off toward her cavern.

Outside Mother Earth's cavern was dark too, the herb gnomes were at her bedside giving her some sort of tonic, the lamps were low, the king at her side.

The two root gnomes were panicked, what could be wrong with Mother Earth? What would they do without her guidance to wake and grow the root babies?

Allium was the head herb gnome and he came walking quietly outside Mother Earth's cavern. He saw the two worried root gnomes and stopped to talk to them.

“She is very sick,” said Allium. “She needs help, perhaps you two are just the ones to help. Go to the sacred well and see if it is clean. The water Mother Earth needs is clean water and her fountain is empty.”

The two root gnomes ran as fast as they could to the mushroom doorway, through the snow covered forest floor to the Sacred Well. Just as Allium suspected, it was dirty and clogged, someone had put garbage in it! They looked around and the animals all looked sick too. Quick as they could the gnomes grabbed their shovels and began to clear the well, the forest animals and other gnomes came to help, before long they could see clean, clear water again. The sun immediately began to shine again and they could hear the birds begin to sing. They rushed back to the mushroom doorway and down to Mother Earth’s cavern. This time it was more light in the room and she was sitting up, drinking fresh clean water from the fountain in her cavern. The gnome king thanked Crocus and Tulip for saving her – for in saving Mother Earth, they saved everyone. Brigid recovered and helped the root gnomes wake and tend the root babies, her flame grew strong as the sun burned warmer each day. Soon the root babies had blossoms and the snow melted. Spring was on her way. The End.

Rolls to braided bread (good for rolls, pizza dough, breakfast breads and more)

½ cup warm water
2 ¼ tsp yeast
1 ½ sticks of butter
1 TBL sugar
2 cups milk or milk substitute
1 tsp salt
1 TBL oil
6 plus cups of flour

Combine water, yeast, 1 tsp of the sugar all in a bowl, stir and let it bubble for about 5 minutes.

Meanwhile... heat milk, butter, salt and the rest of the sugar in a pan over a low heat, just enough to warm the butter and melt it. Remove from the heat, let it cool slightly (you don’t want to kill the yeast) put in a mixing bowl, add yeast mixture and then enough flour so that it is smooth but not sticky, nice and soft.

Rise 30 minutes, then punch down and shape. Dough can also be refrigerated for two weeks (if it lasts that long!) After shaping let dough double and then bake at 375 degree Fahrenheit for 15 to 20 minutes.

Before I close for today I wanted to write down this great little verse I plan to use in the morning:

*Shine, shine little candle flame,
In feasting take your part,
And as you burn yourself away,
O shine into my heart.
~ Sylvia Beels*

February 3

I am so encouraged! We had a great day yesterday, the girls had so much fun – it just gave me the confirmation I needed to keep going. Today, I think we'll try to get in a walk, it is still pretty cold but I noticed a few tiny flowers poking up. I am also going to start reading through some new books I received – Luke surprised me with the collection of books from Wynstones Press, all the seasonal ones plus *Gateways* too! He is so helpful, I am really blessed. I think the next thing I would like to learn is the recorder, I played the flute in school so the recorder shouldn't be a stretch. This Waldorf thing is fun!

February 12

The pastor's wife asked me if I minded organizing a Valentine's day party for the playgroup moms. I think she is trying to find more ways to help me feel included – they were all pretty shocked that I decided to start using Waldorf and she gave me a lecture about it being a cult. I am not sure if she is trying to save me by asking me to work on this party or apologize! I took on the job with a happy heart and decided I would try to show these moms what Waldorf was all about. I have felt so free since I stopped judging others based on their faith, my capacity to love has grown so much. I was reading my scriptures this morning and came across a great passage in Proverbs, Chapter 31 beginning at verse 10 and going through 31:

“Who can find virtuous woman for her price is far above rubies. The heart of her husband doth safely trust in her, so that he shall have no need of spoil. She will do him good and not evil all the days of her life. She seeketh wool, and flax, and worketh willingly with her hands. She is like the merchants' ships; she bringeth her food from afar. She riseth also while it is yet night, and giveth meat to her household, and a portion to her maidens. She considereth a field, and buyeth it: with the fruit of her hands she planteth a vineyard. She girdeth her loins with strength, and strengtheneth her arms. She perceiveth that her merchandise is good: her candle goeth not out by night. She layeth her hands to the spindle, and her hands hold the distaff. She stretcheth out her hand to the poor; yea, she reacheth forth her hands to the needy. She is not afraid of the snow for her household: for all her household are clothed with scarlet. She maketh herself coverings of tapestry; her clothing is silk and purple. Her husband is known in the gates, when he sitteth among the elders of the land. She maketh fine linen, and selleth it; and delivereth girdles unto the merchant. Strength and honour are her clothing; and she shall rejoice in time to come. She openeth her mouth with wisdom; and in her tongue is the law of kindness. She looketh well to the ways of her household, and eateth not the bread of idleness. Her children arise up, and call her blessed; her husband also, and he praiseth her. Many daughters have done virtuously, but thou excellest them all. Favour is deceitful, and beauty is vain: but a woman that feareth the Lord, she shall be praised. Give her of the fruit of her hands; and let her own works praise her in the gates.”

This is the woman I want to be! I know I can be her with work and attendance to my earthly duties. Speaking of earthly duties – the girls are up! I will write about my party ideas later.

February 14

Wow, I am beat, but I had a great day! Those ladies had no idea what hit them. I planned a party for eight moms and 22 children. Most of the children in the playgroup are between three and five years, many of them wild – I just don't get it – oh well not my problem! I had the party set up a bit like stations, I had each mom bring a dozen sugar cookies and I let the



kids decorate them, two for each child and then the rest we decorated and my girls and I took them to a nursing home we enjoy visiting down the street. Esther is named for one of the ladies there that passed away last year, she was Jewish and taught me to knit, she had such a knowing of life and she talked of all the things that I later found in Waldorf – playing with children when they are young, not pushing school too early, so many wonderful things. It was right after her death that we stumbled upon Waldorf – I always felt like she was trying to talk to me from the grave. The food services coordinator at the nursing home was so delighted that we brought cookies... AND we brought Valentines too!

After the cookies, the children all painted together, while the paintings dried, I told them the story of Echo and Narcissus (which raised a few brows as I think they all expected me to

just read some cutesy little library book!) After the paintings dried we cut them into little 3x5 inch segments, folded them and had the kids “write” a message inside – I say “write” with my tongue in my cheek because I didn’t expect any of these little ones to know their letters let alone write any of them... boy was I shocked! I would say easily half the kids not only could write their names but their siblings too! One mom beamed all bright and was telling me that she could never subscribe to Waldorf because her child was just simply too bright – she was snubbing me! I just couldn’t believe how I felt and I was in church! I understood her making a different choice but wow she didn’t have to be so darn rude! Then my mouth got away from me. One of my worst qualities that I know I need to work on... I just blurted out that we were going to use the remaining time to take advantage of all the extra energy we had and jump some rope, after all the room was huge and the kids were getting restless.

I ran out to my van and grabbed the freshly finger knitted playground rope we made last week and put a smile on my face. I touched up my lipstick and rushed back into the church where the moms looked at me in disbelief... I gave two moms jump rope duty and got the kids together, of course many had never jumped before but my Mary had and she was eager to show off so I let her and it wasn’t long before other kids older than Mary wanted to take a turn. I probably shouldn’t be so proud of myself but I stood back and watched the children jump rope, NONE of the children who could write their names, read or do any of the other tasks the mothers there bragged so much about could jump, further they got mad and upset at the children who were jumping wonderfully. Afterward, the mom who was so rude to me came up and wondered why I was so happy about the rope jumping and with a smile I said, “my child might not read and write, but she is happy and she can jump rope, just what she should be doing at age four.” I was strong and confident and I felt great. I called Luke as soon as I was safely in the car and told him the whole story, he laughed and laughed. When

I got home, I repented – I probably should not have gotten so gleeful, but it sure felt good to know once again that I was doing the right thing. God keeps showing me signs!

The end of the party was the most fun for the children I think – since the church had given me a nice budget, I was able to go to our local rock shop and buy heart shaped rocks for the children with fun little bags for them to go in. The children were delighted (I think the mothers were confused again!) I had hoped some of the other moms would want to join us at the nursing home but they didn't so the girls and I went and had our fun, now we are home and warm in front of the heating vents sipping our cocoa. A great day indeed!



Echo and Narcissus (for young children)

Echo was a naughty little fairy, she was always tattling so Mother Earth punished her by only letting her say back what someone else had said so that is why sometimes we hear an echo, it is her calling back in the only way she knows how. Well Echo fell in love with a beautiful boy named Narcissus, he was rude, he never shared with anyone, he thought that everyone should love him because he was so wonderful and cute. Echo loved him so much but all she could ever say to him was what he said to her so she flew off alone to live in caves and under cliffs where she can still be heard today. Narcissus was such a grumpy boy, he always wanted things to himself, one day while he sat by the river with his favorite ball he bent over to get a drink and saw a cute little boy with a ball like his – he got mad, he wanted the ball but every time he tried to touch it the boy went away. His was so sad that he stayed by the water his whole life trying to get the ball away from the cute little boy in the water, now in his place stands a beautiful little purple and white flower that we call the Narcissus. (I had drawn a picture of one for the children to see)

February 20

I was at the library the other day and found a wonderful book, *The Old Turtle and the Broken Truth* by Douglas Wood. I loved it so much that I ran to the book store to buy two copies, one for us at home and one for the library at church. It is a wonderful story of tolerance and love and how egos can mess it all up. I wrapped it up and took it over to the pastor's house. No one was home so I left it on the door step.

February 25

Mary is about to turn five! She is so excited she just can't stand it. I can't believe she is getting so big! I have been hunting around online and found a fun website kitntales.com that has wonderful little birthday packets for children, between that and the *Gateways* book I think I have a great deal of material for her party. She says she wants a fairy tea party. Her two favorite friends are from Sunday school so in an effort to pass the olive branch with these ladies yet again, I invited the moms too. We made fun tiny little invitations, just the right size for fairies.

Mary's menu:

- Fairy tea
- Fairy cakes (we are going to make little cup cakes with the mini pan and decorate them.)
- Frosted sugar cookies for her guests (plus she said she'd like it if they could frost their own, she loved this part of the Valentine's Day celebration.
- A big birthday cake in the shape of a heart

Some fun thoughts I had for her big day

- Easy capes for all the girls, since there will only be a few little girls at the party it should be easy to pull off.
- Fun party favors – I thought of stones from the rock shop in her party colors (pastels of course!) she also asked if I would put my new crochet skills to the test and make them little bags for their stones, I also found some great little cloth drawstring party bags at Target the other day for \$1 each! That dollar section always has weird – but sometimes great stuff, I was impressed. I also found some little two inch pots with dirt and seeds already in them! They were also just a dollar!

The birthday packet I got from kitntales.com had some fun ideas – it suggested making a book for her as part of her present, so in the invitation I asked the moms to have the girls draw Mary a picture and gave them the paper I wanted them to use, then I will bind it up into a book for her. Luke and I will draw or write something for it too. Her birthday is next week so we have a good deal of planning to do!

March 1

Wow another fun day! Today is Mary's birthday and we had such a fun party. I am so glad we did the fairy tea party instead of a crazy party at one of those party places, this was so relaxed and fun. The little girls had a ball. Esther even joined in, she was certain to be a big girl like her sister.

I found a great little poem in *Gateways* by Wynstones and I changed the ages around for Mary.

Verse of Anticipation

*When I have said my evening prayer,
And my clothes are folded on the chair,
And mother switches off the light,
I'll still be four years old tonight.*

*But, from the very break of day,
Before the children rise and play,
Before the greenness turns to gold,
Tomorrow, I'll be FIVE years old.*

*Five kisses when I wake,
Five candles on my cake.*



She just giggled when I put her to bed last night with that verse. That volume has some wonderful little verses and stories in it, I know we'll get lots of use out of it. As I tucked her in she begged to know about the day she was born and what she might have done in heaven before coming here – good thing I have started toning up my storytelling skills! Between the Wynstones books and the kitntales.com stories I have been doing a much better job at flying by the seat of my pants!

When her guests arrived, they were greeted by Mary who took their coats and I helped each girl into a cape. They were delighted, one girl told me that she didn't have any dress up clothes and how excited she was that now she could be a real princess at home! Mary took them to the party table and each girl sat down and looked through their party sack, then they decorated cookies and had little fairy sandwiches (cream cheese sandwiches cut small) and giggled like little girls. Mary got a new wooden toy kitchen from Luke and I and my parents got her a bunch of things to go with it, so while the mothers drank tea, the little girls played and played.

Her guests just left and Luke took both girls for a ride to give me a break. The party was a real treat and while these two moms still think I am strange, I think they saw how much fun the girls had and that made an impression. Maybe someday we'll have a Waldorf playgroup.

March 17

Well I better get some green on before the girls get up! Today we are going hunting for GREEN – I thought we'd eat green eggs (no ham!) and green rolls (my roll recipe) for breakfast and then go for a nice long walk by the river, feed the ducks and count all the things we can find that are green. After lunch Mary and I will paint during Esther's nap and when Esther gets up we'll decorate some shamrock cookies – I just realized how much I write about cookies! We love cookies! I could write a book about cookies. I am brewing a story about our animal gnomes and how they could have helped dear Saint Patrick drive the snakes from Ireland... there are so many legends... I think I will pray about it in the shower. Off to start my day.

March 19

Today we are preparing for the equinox. This is new to me and I have had a lot of fun researching it. I was so glad to read that the Easter Bunny comes from old Pagan traditions – it never felt right to me to celebrate it with Easter and the Resurrection. Now we can do the bunny and celebrate our risen Lord and I don't have to feel conflicted!

Our plans to prepare for the next few days:

- Plant some wheat grass – I have scads of wheat for bread making and I didn't realize that is where wheat grass comes from (yeah no one sent me that memo!) so we will plant some simple wheat that we've soaked in a bit of dirt in a spring pot I found – I decided it would be a great center piece for our nature table and a great place to put our eggs that we are going to dye today.
- Dye eggs – this is one of my favorite projects!

- Dyeing silks – ok I am going to be brave – I pulled out some “Kool-Aid” that I bought forever ago – back before I knew better (I will have to talk Mary out of wanting to drink it!) I understand it is an easy process of just wetting the silk, sprinkling on the “Kool-Aid”, heat setting it in microwave and letting it sit overnight. Then we are supposed to rinse it until the water runs clear and let them dry... the girls will have so much fun with this!
- More cookie decorating! I have all this cookie dough!
- I got some modeling beeswax so I think we might model some little bunnies for the nature table too!

Ok so that’s a lot! But it will be fun. I love this little song I found in Wynstones *Spring* – I have a soft spot for gnomes!

*Come, O come, ye little gnomes, let us leave our mountain homes,
we’ll free the Flower Queen and make her a throne in the meadow green.
~ A. Matthews*

Now I need a recorder! That is my next purchase.

March 22

I set out today trying to figure out the great mystery surrounding when Easter is and why it changes each year. I am always amused when it is early like this year and have always thought that the Catholic Church decided it in some dark room someplace with a bunch of bishops and cardinals. So... just how is it decided? Easter is the first Sunday after the first full moon after the vernal equinox. How cool is that? I love little bits of information like that.

Luke and I hid eggs with treats and money in them for the girls today, they had a ball finding them – it takes such pressure off knowing that a festival can be a “season” rather than a specific day, it has allowed us to really enjoy ourselves.

March 26

Happy Easter to me! Today holds a special place for me. While so many around me are focusing on the death of Christ, I rather enjoy focusing on his life, his ministry and then his life giving force after his resurrection. He is the living Christ! We are off to church, the girls are dressed in pretty new dresses and we are going to walk (we are so lucky to have church down the street.)



March 26 later in the day

It is a good thing that I was in church! I would have blown my top elsewhere. A few weeks ago the girls and I took the book by Douglas Woods to the pastor's house, all wrapped up pretty with a note to include it in the library at church. Well today right after the service, both the pastor and his wife pulled Luke aside and asked him if he knew what I was reading to our children. Luke looked at me and back toward the pastor and said that he thought he had a good idea of what went on in his own house. The pastor pulled out the book, handed it to Luke and acted like Luke should be shocked at it. Luke asked the pastor what the problem was and the pastor had the nerve to tell him that the book and its message wasn't welcome in their church and that he would be praying for my salvation since I had decided to run with the Steiner cult. Then... oh and I have never been more proud to be Luke's wife – Luke looked the pastor straight in the eye and told him that we would not be coming back to this church, that he was under the impression that the church was a loving church, a Christian church and one that embraced, tolerated and taught those of all faiths and that apparently we had been wrong in our assumptions. He took the book right from the pastor's hand and told him that he was sure we'd find a church to welcome not only our book but our family too. Then he turned to me and we left. We got in the car and I about smothered him in kisses – when we got home I made the quickest lunch ever and found a movie for the girls that they hadn't watched in a while so they would be busy and I stole away with Luke – most fun ever on a Sunday afternoon – it should be illegal. Then we prayed together and both felt strongly that this was still the right path for us and that the Lord would help us find the right church. I am so blessed.

April 22

Our first Earth Day... not that we needed Waldorf to celebrate Earth Day, but it sure helped motivate me! For the equinox, we got the girls some window crayons so I thought we'd get those out and do some fun earth drawings on the windows. It is finally getting warm here so we decided to go on a picnic – Luke wants to join us so he said he'd meet us for lunch. We made a yummy vegetarian lunch in honor of our planet. We got up and made some fresh bread with dried herbs and garlic, I made some garlic hummus to go with it – so easy, I ground the garbanzo beans and black beans (organic from a can, although I am sure soaked fresh would do well too) in the blender, then added herbs and garlic... YUM! We brought some fresh mozzarella that I found at this cute little organic store down the street... some Greek olives I found there too, sliced tomatoes, some fruit, I made some fresh herbal sun tea and put it all together in a basket – we even found a great tie dyed sheet to use for a blanket. What a feast we had while the girls played by the river and I sat and felt my dear husband stare at me in amazement – he really is a wonderful man, we are so equally yoked, everyone should be so lucky.

After we got home, the girls and I snuggled up and read Audrey Wood's book *When the Root Children Wake Up* and then of course the girls – well Mary mostly as she's taken to begging these days – pleaded for a new gnome story. They wanted to know what the gnomes did on Earth Day – I found a great little poem in Wynstones *Spring* that I altered to go with my story.

The Gnome Kingdom's Earth Day Celebration

The gnomes were so pleased when the humans decided to celebrate Mother Earth each year with her own celebration – of course the gnomes have been doing this since time began and it has always been a mystery how the humans decided to do it – some believe that a little gnome whispered the idea into the ears of the founders of Earth Day, but no one knows for sure. On the Mother Earth Day in the gnome kingdom, all the gnomes dress in clean clothes (something they don't do every day!) they help each make a big feast for a huge celebration on the forest floor. Everyone participates – Sister Spring is there (one of Mother Earth's sisters) Mother Earth comes dressed in her finest bright green gown with little flower buds on it, her hair is adorned with sprigs of colors, her husband, the high king is dressed in fine robes of glittering green to honor his wife – so much excitement is in the air. They dance and sing and honor the Earth. The forest is all clean, Brigid's well runs clear and fun is had by all.

The gnomes sing to the Mother:

Here we build in the forest green,
A shining throne for the Mother Queen.
And she sings back to the gnomes:

I thank you gnomes for your sheltering hand,
From the Winter cold across the land,
In the soft, brown earth I lived warm and safe,
The cold I need not fear.
But now in the golden rays of the sun
I mount my throne again,
And scatter the fields and woods with flowers,
Bringing joy to the hearts of men.

Summer

Meet Willow: She is a second generation Pagan and partner to Guy. They have two boys, Bowen, age 7 and Lugh, age 3. Willow has unschooled Bowen from the beginning and has been attracted to Waldorf because of the nature aspect of the method.



May 1

May Day!! Beltane - this is my favorite day of the year... ok maybe not, but close! The Great Goddess is so alive in everything around us as the Earth turns toward the summer solstice. Today we have so much fun planned – we are dancing the May pole with some friends over at the UU Church and then making May Day crowns. Lugh was so young last year I wonder if he will remember it. Yesterday, while we were making the flower ring for the top, Bowen asked me what the May pole stood for... I hesitated, I am not sure if I am ready to have a fertility talk just yet – I visualized the scene in the “Wicker Man” when the girls in the school tell the teacher that the May pole is a symbol of the phallic and the teacher affirms that it is indeed a symbol for the penis and how it is danced during the May day celebration for fertility... then the look on the policeman’s face! Easily my favorite movie! After my shock of him asking wore off I decided to only tackle what he asked. I told him that the May pole was a symbol of fertility and the cycle of life. He thought that was a great answer! Whew.

I found a great little poem in Wynstones *Spring*:

*Golden sun in heaven blue
Come and warm us through and through.
Come and give us of your gold
That the blossom may unfold.*

May Day Crowns – this is a simple idea that I have seen in many places and remember doing as a child, simply gather flowers and soft twigs, wrap in a crown shape with ribbon and tie together. They are loved by boys and girls alike!

Our May pole was “planted” in the ground at the church with quick set concrete. The pole is a simple 2” X 4” piece of lumber that is 12 feet long. We attached ribbons to the top (eight ribbons, different colors) We also decorated a wreath together and attached it to the top with the intention of changing out the wreath and the ribbons with each new year. I

hunted and hunted for the instructions for the dance and found some great ones in my favorite book (should have looked there first!) *Circle Round: Raising Children in the Goddess Traditions* by Starhawk, Diane Baker and Anne Hill.

“While standing in a circle around the pole, have everyone pair off and face a partner. The first step will be to pass to the left of their partner, and then face their next partner. The second step will be to pass to the right of this partner and so on, alternating between passing left and passing right. With ribbons in hand, this becomes a weaving motion, with each participant alternately passing under her partner’s ribbon and raising her own ribbon for her next partner to pass under.”

I read it and then we practiced it a few times before deciding that we could try it as a group. I am so excited!

May 5

Being unschoolers with a Waldorf flair has always been amusing to some, but I have always felt like Waldorf was all about rhythm and development and listening to children. I read Steiner and while he doesn’t blend totally with my Pagan beliefs, I do think he has a lot of wisdom and I think he was right on with the developmental stuff. I love that he really would have delayed formal learning until age twelve and used stories so much for the younger grades. I am so blessed to have been introduced to his work when Bowen was tiny, it really felt like the right direction to go in. I still wanted to preserve unschooling at least for Bowen’s younger years but all the while I have done a little experiment, when he was six we read Grimm’s and he loved them, late last year he taught himself to read – we did no lesson work, just read the stories and had fun. So this year we did the same, we did fable stories and started doing stories on noble people, he has loved it but now I am struggling a bit – I even called a friend of mine who is a Waldorf consultant and asked her opinion... this whole saints thing in grade two – do I have to do it? I mean of course I don’t “have” to do it, but he was so interested in St. Nicholas and all the stories we read about him, he loved all the aspects of Brigid and St. Valentine... so I am being told by his spirit that he must need this somewhere – but how to teach it without teaching Christianity?

When I called my friend to ask her, she chuckled and said that I had the very same question that her conservative Christian clients ask her – how do you teach this method without teaching the religions within the method? Her answer really made me think. She asked me if I wanted my sons to stay in the United States their whole life and know nothing but other Pagans – of course not! I told her. She asked me what I was afraid of by teaching tolerance... afraid? I had not really thought of it that way... of course I want my sons to have tolerance, just like I want others to tolerate our beliefs... she said that I can teach the stories of the saints without teaching the religion, she even suggested that I can teach the Old Testament portions of next year without becoming Jewish – when she put it all that way I could see how worldly the Waldorf method was – it looks very Pagan in the earlier years, then Christian in grade two, Jewish in grade three, Pagan again in grade four with the Nordic myths, and then grade five... wow too many faiths to count! I decided to relax a bit and just take each year as it comes and meet Bowen and Lugh both where they are.

May 10

These boys are so much fun! I am so thankful to be home with them. Guy is great, I couldn't ask for a stronger partner and parent for my sons. Bowen and Guy are building planters boxes for our garden that we have started inside. I am so excited for this year – we focused on things we love to eat – spinach for Bowen, carrots for Lugh, tomatoes for Guy, strawberries for me and herbs, herbs, herbs for us all. I got a copy of a great little book called *Echoes of a Dream* by Susan Smith and it suggested a great little children's garden with all our favorites plus sunflowers and nasturtiums, marigolds and calendula to help combat insects naturally. This is our first big gardening year so it will be fun.



Bowen told me that he would like a birthday party where the kids got to build something and that gave me an idea – he has been begging us for a dog and I thought it might be fun to have friends over to help build a dog house and ask gift givers to bring something he would need for a dog – then Guy and I can get him the puppy he wants. I need to run the idea past Guy but I bet he'll love it. We've got a couple weeks so I think we could pull it off.

May 12

So here is Lugh, nearly three, acting like he wants to read! Now most parents would think that was great... and I am grumbling – I had a real good meditation about it and realize it is all about imitation, he wants to do what Bowen is doing so I have to get better at having things for him to do. I am going to start tomorrow going back to a lot of little things that Bowen used to love – I think I'll put together a basket just for Lugh to get into when Bowen wants school activities.

This is what I have gathered so far:

- Homemade play dough
- Homemade “sewing” cards and yarn
- His favorite BIG puzzles

- His favorite board books
- Needle felted ladybug balls (his favorite)
- Big bells (he loves these big bells we found last Yule)
- His own crayons and a blank lesson book I made for him

I am also going to start keeping a nature table more regularly that Lugh can help with and start having circle time – Bowen loves the circle time I started doing for his religious education class at church and he’s always asking for it at home. I pulled out some favorite resources – Wynstones *Summer*, *Circle Round*, and *A Child’s Seasonal Treasury*. Rhythm in general will help me and I got off of it somehow... we’re going to get back to it, I know the boys will love it.

May 13

First day of our new rhythm – I am pretty ambitious about what I’ll try to get done, but I thought it’s Monday, we’ll just see how it flows. We are going to start with the grains and colors of the day... I LOVE this part of Steiner as it flows nicely with my Pagan upbringing and gives me a chance to use my baking skills. Last night I carefully laid my plans, got out my recipe books and went to town planning the next week.

Monday’s grain is rice, so we will have rice for lunch, easy enough. The color for the day is purple or violet so I went through our clothes and found what I could in these colors, I’ll have to see if the lady at MamaTieDye.com can make us the rest. I even found a purple shirt for Guy – he thinks I have lost it but loves me anyway! He also approved the birthday idea so I have that party to plan this week too... I think I might do it as a partial surprise – Bowen loves surprises so he’ll just trust me if I tell him I have it under control.

Today’s planet is the moon so I will do some drawings with that symbol, I thought I’d make a wheel chart and put it up on our chalkboard so it would be easy for Bowen to see everyday before he gets dressed.

I am also starting our basket today... we’ll see how that goes, I thought we’d make the sewing cards and go have them laminated, Lugh will enjoy doing that.

May 14

Yesterday was a hit so I think today I will stretch a bit more. Tuesday’s color is red – easy enough, we seem to have loads of red. Today’s planet is Mars, easy enough symbol to draw and the grain is barley. It was tough to decide what to put together for the barley – barley soup would be heavenly... but it’s May and I am thinking about nothing but being outside in the sunshine so the raw barley cereal won instead and was way easier to make!

Raw Barley (or any grain) cereal

¼ cup barley

1 TBL raw seeds (I like sunflower)

1 TBL raw nuts (I LOVE almonds)

Night before, put each of the above into it's own bowl or cup and cover with water. In the morning pour off the water (I often like to keep it and chill it, add some lemon and ginger for an afternoon zinger!) I like to chop up my nuts and they chop easier after they've soaked. I put a portion in my bowl and cover with some raw almond milk or goats milk if I have it on hand, a dollop of honey or syrup (I prefer maple syrup) oh and bananas or strawberries or both! I feel like such a great mom when I make this – all crunchy and Waldorfy and perfect... it is my mom badge of honor!

Raw Almond Milk

1 cup of raw almonds – soak overnight

In the morning put soaked almonds in the blender with about three cups of water, I like to start with that and add more if I think it needs it. I add a teaspoon or so of vanilla and maybe a bit of maple syrup to sweeten – or I sometimes will soak dates and use them in the mixture as well, they are nice and sweet and perfect in milk.

Since Lugh loved making the sewing cards yesterday, today he and I will tackle making play dough, it will be good practice for making bread together. Yesterday he went through my basket stash and found the perfect basket for his “school time treasures” as he has been calling it – he is so cute!

Play Dough

3 cups flour
1 ½ cups salt
3 cups water
2 TBL vegetable oil
1 TBL cream of tartar
Food coloring or unsweetened “Kool-aid” to color
Favorite essential oils

Mix all ingredients except the essential oil in a large saucepan. Cover and cook over medium low heat until the dough comes away from the edge and is hard to stir with a spoon. Remove from heat. Cool until it can be handled then knead in the essential oil. Store air tight.



May 15

We are getting the hang of this – we are having a morning circle after our meditation with Guy and then the boys play or do little chores (like put away dishes or fold laundry) while I make breakfast, we eat together and then Guy is off to work. The boys and I have been going for a walk in the morning, we are collecting rocks for the nature table for the mineral week.

Today's color is yellow, something we have a lot of as it is Guy's favorite color and the grain is millet. For snack today I think we will make my favorite orange millet muffins.

Orange Millet Muffins

2 cups flour
1 tsp baking powder
1 tsp baking soda
¼ tsp salt
1 ½ cups cooked millet (other grains work too)
1 cup orange juice (or pineapple)
½ cup water
½ cup mandarin oranges
1/3 cup oil
½ cup maple syrup
2 tsp vanilla
2 eggs or egg replacer



Preheat oven to 350 F. Sift dry ingredients. In blender, put millet and juice, pulse until smooth, add water, oil and syrup, pulse again. Add egg and pulse. Pour into dry mixture, combine well, add fruit and pour into muffin tins. Bake 30 minutes.

Today's planet is Mercury, another fun symbol. We've been drawing the symbols after our walk and then Bowen has been begging for more saint stories so I am giving him just what he asks for, we are curling up in our favorite chair and I am telling or reading to him – sometimes he wants to read them to me and then he loves to draw about them. Today Lugh enjoyed his play dough while I drew with Bowen – it worked out well.

May 16

Today is Thursday and we have no orange shirts – so I found some orange yarn and we finger knitted some quick friendship bracelets before bed last night – of course we all have to have one and Bowen... silly boy, knitted one for the dog... the one that we don't have yet! Today's grain is rye... honestly this is not one that I am great at so yesterday we were off to the bread shop to get a loaf. Guy loves rye bread and so I got his favorite loaf and made him a great sandwich to take to work today. I figured I am good at so many other baking tasks that I can fall down on this one and be forgiven! We left the bread shop and my lamenting must have gotten to Bowen who promptly turned to me and said "It's ok Mommy, you can't be perfect at EVERYTHING!" He's so right. I am happy with all I can do. I am a great mom and I need to remember that!

Today, after our walk, we are going to join some neighbor children and make some lesson books, just in time too... I just checked the tracking number for our supply order and I think Lugh's new tin of crayons should arrive today, he will be so surprised!

I've also got Bowen's birthday party to plan. Here's what I have so far:

- Invites for five of his favorite little guy friends, they turned out cute, I found some hardware stickers and in the invitation I told the kids to each bring their own hammer and wear grubby clothes. I also let them know that gifts are not necessary but if they feel like getting Bowen something that they should get supplies for a new puppy owner.
- I found a cookie cutter in the shape of a dog bone to make cookies out of.

I've got to get the invites delivered and also find some dog house plans so I can give the materials list to Guy – I bet there are some simple ones to be found on a web search.

May 17

Today is Friday, our color is green – another color we need more shirts of – our grain is oats, that is easy! We all love oats so for breakfast we each had a big bowl of them, smothered in butter and honey... it was great. I am running late today – book making was great, Lugh is loving his new little lesson book and Bowen has something special for his saint pictures. Today we'll catch the symbol we missed yesterday, it was Jupiter and we'll also get in today's, Venus. TGIF – I am looking forward to the weekend and Guy being in charge for a bit!

May 18

Ahhh... blissful Saturday. I can sit here in the morning light and contemplate my day... yeah that is funny! I have a bit of time today, more than usual but then I think we'll head out to the farmer's market and get some fresh produce for the week. Today's color is indigo, something we have plenty of so that is good and the grain is corn. I think I will make some corn chowder for lunch, it's a hot soup but who can resist when you use potatoes and cream and corn. Today's planet is Saturn, we may have to draw it in chalk out on the sidewalk since I am sure we'll be outside a bunch today.

Corn Chowder... so simple, cream fresh corn or use canned cream corn, cut some potatoes to add to the mix, some milk, some cream and some cheese – definitely not a waist watching soup! I usually season it good with garlic and herbs and let it simmer all day. So yummy! I will start it in the crock pot before we leave for our bike ride to the farmer's market and then it should be ready by this afternoon when we are ready to eat.

May 19

Comfy, cozy, restful... that is how I describe Sunday. Today's planet is the Sun and with the beautiful weather we have had this spring it is easy to relate that in a lesson for the boys. Today's color is white, something we have an abundance of, thankfully and the grain is wheat... I may have gone a bit overboard, I have been baking with the boys all day and oddly it has been very restful.

We started the day with blender waffles:

1 cup of milk (any kind will do)

1 cup of whole wheat kernels (not ground)

Blend in the blender for 3-4 minutes, then add ½ cup of milk and blend 2-3 more minutes. Add 2 eggs, ½ cup of oil, 2 tsp sugar, ½ tsp salt and 3 tsp baking powder. Blend all together for 1-2 minutes. Pour from blender into hot waffle iron.

Those were so good that I pulled out one of my favorite Waldorf bread recipes... I have made it a ton of times and I can not remember where I got it, but it is yummy.

Bread recipe

1 ½ tbsp dry yeast
1 cup warm water
dollop of honey
1 stick butter
1 large wooden spoonful honey
1 tbsp salt
3 cups warm milk (or water)
4 - 5 cups spelt flour
4 - 5 cups whole wheat flour



Optional: sunflower seeds, sesame seeds, cinnamon, raisins, millet, rolled oats, nuts, etc.

Preheat oven to 350 F. Sprinkle yeast in the cup of warm water mixed with the dollop of honey. Let the yeast float on top of the water without mixing. Set aside in a warm place until it gets foamy (about 10 minutes).

Put a stick of butter, the large wooden spoonful of honey, and salt in a large bowl. Pour the warm milk (or water) over the butter, honey and salt. Add the yeast mixture. Sift in the flours and add any of the optional ingredients. Cover with a cloth and set in a warm place to rise (10-15 minutes). Add enough flour to make the dough “kneadable” and knead until it is smooth and elastic (5-10 minutes). Form rolls and place on an oiled baking sheet. Let rise a few more minutes if time allows. Bake 20-30 minutes or until light brown. Yield: About 24 rolls or 2 loaves

And for our afternoon snack I made these great scones that Guy and I had when we went on a weekend get away before the boys came along:

Makes 10 scones

2 cups all purpose flour
¼ cup sugar
2 ½ teaspoons baking powder
½ teaspoon salt
6 tablespoons butter, chilled
1 egg
buttermilk to make 1 cup with the egg
½ cup white chocolate chips
½ cup dried cranberries or raisins

Preheat oven to 400 degrees Fahrenheit . Combine flour, sugar, baking powder, and salt. Cut butter into pieces and combine with flour mixture until mixture resembles coarse corn meal. Add chips and dried cranberries. Make a well and pour in the egg mixed with buttermilk. Gently mix only until combined. Do not over mix!

Drop onto an ungreased baking sheet. Bake for 13-15 minutes until slightly brown.

This week has taught me one very valuable thing... writing daily is hard but a challenge I am glad I took, I know it made an impact on Guy and Bowen, they both made journals from the class we took... it has been great to have a place to write everything down. Bowen's birthday is coming up soon... next week. It will be very interesting!

May 22

All those little boys have worn me out! What a wonderful day – my sweet boy is now eight! I can't believe it. He is so happy right now, he and Lugh are out back chasing the cute Great Dane puppy we rescued... puppy... this dog is HUGE and he's just a pup... Guy wanted to name him Scooby Doo but Bowen vetoed it – he wanted it to be like one of the dogs from Swiss Family Robinson – so the puppy is Turk. Of course now he is insisting we get a Duke dog too! The party was great, we found doghouse plans on the web and Guy got all the lumber and some kid aprons from Home Depot. The little boys that were here had a ball! I made him a cake in the shape of a doghouse... I took a big 9" by 13" cake pan, inverted it on a big cookie sheet that I had covered in tin foil. Then I cut it into a dog house shape (square at the bottom and triangle on top) – I decorated it and made some dog bone shaped cookies, all his guests brought things like water bowls, a leash, food bowls, a pooper scooper – so much stuff we are just going to have fun with this dog. I made the dog a bed out of some recycled sheets and put it right next to Bowen's bed. I think I'll go take a nap!

May 25

Puppies are hard work. Fun but hard work. I thought potty training was hard.

Our rhythm is going great, Lugh is loving his basket of stuff – both boys love taking Turk on our walks, I am so happy we made this choice for our family. I caught Guy online at the site for the dog rescue looking for a Duke dog... what is he thinking? Silly man.

June 10

We have been so busy with the summer. Our rhythm is good, we have added in a field trip day and both boys are enjoying it. We caught the show "The Dog Whisperer" at a friend's house and we went out and got the boxed set, the boys are learning so much about being calm and assertive with the dog, I am so impressed at how well Turk acts and it is a good thing too, he is getting huge. I can't believe how much he's grown in the short time we've had him! I am simply amazed.

The solstice is coming! We are getting ready for that, our garden is blooming nicely and we have all kinds of wonderful raw food to eat from it, it is wonderful how fast Mother Earth can make things grow. I keep catching Lugh outside eating my strawberries! He'll come inside trying to hide it and of course he's got the evidence all over his face. Too cute. I am thankful that he's really backed off the wanting to read thing, I just was really laid back about it all and gave him other things to do and he was ok with those other things being his

‘work.’ He has really loved it. He draws and colors with us sometimes and when Bowen and I are doing handwork then Lugh gets out his sewing cards but it is all very relaxed and I still feel like with all we are doing the kids are driving what they want to learn. Lugh loves ladybugs and so we are reading about them and catching them but it is all on his level, his favorite book by far is *The Grouchy Ladybug* by Eric Carle – he is so cute trying to talk like the ladybug in the book.



June 19

Our preparations are beginning. We have a fun tradition of dancing naked under the moon at midsummer – something I did even as a child, of course I don’t suggest everyone do it, but it is something we enjoy! So Bowen and Lugh are hard at work making sure that none of Turk’s squishy “gifts” are left anywhere in the yard. I just got off the phone with our minister and she is planning a turning of the wheel dance for Sunday’s service and wanted to make sure I knew how to do it – I told her there was one in *Circle Round* we could use that is fairly easy. We are also going to do a sun piñata for the kids to break open during the social hour.

I made some fun things for the boys too – a dream pillow with herbs in it, a new gnome for the nature table and I found a great pattern in *Feltcraft* by Petra Berger for a dog so I enlarged it and made it look like Turk.

We changed up the circle songs a bit with new ones I found in *Summer* and *A Child’s Seasonal Treasury*:

*A long green snake in the grass are we
Our tail is far away.
We wriggle and wriggle and twist and turn
As in and out we sway.*

*Daisies so bright, grasses so green,
Tell me I pray, how do you keep clean?
Summertime showers, summertime rain,
Wash dusty flowers all clean again.*

Of course Lugh’s favorite song right now is The Cobbler Song because it is loud! I wish I could remember where it came from!

*There’s a cobbler down the street,
Mending shoes for little feet
With a BANG and a BANG and a BANG, BANG, BANG
And a BANG and a BANG and a BANG!*

Of course he gets as loud as he can with those bangs! I love boys, they are so much fun.

I am off to make some cupcakes in honor of the sun turning in for the season. I am so blessed to be who I am.

July 30

I can't believe I went so far between entries! I feel like I am sitting down catching up with a long lost friend! We went on vacation this month and it just threw me all off, so now here we are starting back to our rhythms again. I know that if I start mine by journaling, rising early, getting my time in – then the rest will fall into place. Two days until Lugh's birthday – my baby is turning four! How did that happen? Of course everyone wants to know about his name, they just assume it is short for Luis but it's not. Lugh is the God at the time of Lammas or in old Pagan times it was also referred to as Lughnasad. I remember not being sure what his name would be, I didn't even know if he was a boy. I pushed him out and Guy caught him and we both knew that his name should be Lugh. The beginning of the harvest, summer is beginning to dwindle and wrapped up in Lammas are all our hopes and dreams that we have cultivated through the planting season. My little boy is such a gift to me.

Lugh just wants a cake with fruit on it for his birthday... and family... that I can do! For the festival we usually make a list of all the bad habits we would like to die as the harvest ends and we make a wicker man from twigs that have fallen in the yard, vines that are ready to be cut away, etc. and then we put our list inside and have a symbolic burning. Of course back in the old times there would be an actual sacrifice but we believe that symbolism and intention are the important parts of the festival so that is what we focus on.

Of course the day won't be complete without me curling up with Guy and watching the 1970's movie *The Wicker Man*!