

## Talk for the Assembly at WSGC

Welcome! Today is a special day; today is the first day of winter; tonight is the longest night of year for us; it is the winter solstice. Solstice in Latin means the sun stops its journey in the south and now the days begin to grow longer. Once upon a time I traveled to the Arctic Circle. Backpacking through Europe on a Eurail pass, I took the train north through Scandinavia to Abisko, Sweden, to see the Summer Solstice, the longest day of the year. With the sunlight shining brightly way past your bedtime, you don't feel tired at all. When I got off the train, I climbed a hill and reached the summit at midnight. And there I watched the sun traveling around the horizon, as an encircling round. When the sun touched a mountain peak in the east... the birds started to sing, as if it were dawn at midnight. I saw this dance of the sun circling the North Pole and I sensed the wisdom behind nature, a sense of truth on a grander scale.

That was one adventure in the far north, but also I lived in the southern hemisphere for two years. There in the Maluti Mountains, called the roof of Africa, I taught third grade to thirteen different nationalities of children in the Maseru English Medium Preparatory School. It was a simple life in a peaceful place, where the people are shepherds raising goats and sheep. And there in the rarified air of the mountains, double rainbows appear after rain storms. The glowing, radiant colors of red above to violet below, is the rainbow closest to earth. Children know the colors and may name them. [And they did.] The rainbow above that one is in mirror image, with violet above... yet another wonder of the natural world.

It was in Cape Town, Republic of South Africa, where I discovered eurythmy and visited a Waldorf community for the first time, Michael Oak Waldorf School. And then I realized what I had been searching for, a community of like-minded people. So I returned to New York to study eurythmy and Waldorf Education.

Imagine that you discover a new community. You see flowers planted along the pathway by the students. You enter the lobby where groups of parents are doing handwork or relaxing with their children or exploring the Magic Closet. Evergreen boughs, holly, crystals, and flowering plants create a winter wonderland indoors. Original artwork by students adorns the hallways and display cases. Good smells come from the cafeteria where wholesome meals are made with love. And best of all, it is a community where the arts are supported, where children practice to play instruments together in orchestra or band, to sing in chorus or musicals, to act in class plays, to garden, and to dance, to move, and to learn by doing together. These social arts teach us to be in harmony with each other. This is a place, where the children feel quite at home and sometimes, do not want to leave.

And here we are, at the Waldorf School of Garden City. We have experienced much creativity in the offerings presented by teachers and by the students, who are leading us to their future. Please join me in a round of applause for pianist Heawon Kim Stuckenbruck.

Let us think how we may build community. Last month I went to Camp Glen Brook with the seventh and eighth grade classes. There I witnessed the students working energetically in service to the community. Loving, good deeds were done and respectful attitudes were practiced. Each one of us spoke of what made us unique, but our favorite moments were gathering around the fireplace, sipping tea and bonding with each other. And the high school students who have gone on exchange to schools in other cultures discover that the Waldorf community may be in other cultures, for the Waldorf community is worldwide. Let us work together to build community.

I would like to close with these words recently written by my friend, Rev. Gisela Wielki of the Christian Community in New York City.

*The season of scattered leaves and seeds is drawing to a close.*

*Once separated from the plant each seed is given over to its own uncertain destiny.*

*In the olden days it was the time when the rural population would begin to gather around the fire of the hearth. The warmth of the hearth countered the scattering of leaves and seeds outside. In today's urban world there are no hearths to gather around. And peoples' growing sense of feeling scattered, even abandoned, is more than a seasonal experience.*

*But does it have to be that way? We may not have a hearth, but all we need is a candle, one candle. We can gaze into its light, and especially when seen against a dark background, a circular rainbow appears around the flame.*

*The rainbow as symbol has come to mean different things to different people in our time. Some of it is political, some social. It has become a sign of solidarity with others. It has also become an expression for: This is who I am. Who I am is a flame with a circular rainbow around. And so are you and so are we, each member of humanity a flame with a rainbow around.*

*Imagine humanity seen against the darkness of the universe: one big rainbow float.*

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