



March 19, 2020

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Dear Parents,

Last Friday we made the difficult decision to close our school through Spring Break. While we had hoped school closures would not be necessitated, we had been carefully following CDC and Department of Health guidance and had begun preparations for a closure. Given this week's additional directives recommending against all gatherings of over ten people, I am glad PCWS has closed for now, and yet like all of you I am saddened and deeply concerned about what is coming in the next weeks and months. Covid-19 is a serious disease and its spread, exponential. Social distancing, while very difficult, is important because it will save lives. These are very troubling times not only for each of us, but for every single human being in the world today.

As I mentioned, we had been preparing for the last few weeks for the possibility of having to close and use the tools of remote learning. Several of us have been participants in numerous AWSNA (Association of Waldorf Schools of North America) Zoom calls where we discussed the potential need for closure, and then the actuality of moving to remote learning until the virus is contained. During these calls, we shared ideas and concerns as to how to best both meet with the benefits of and to protect the children from the overuse of technology. For Waldorf schools to resort to going online is an unexpected situation. Nevertheless, we need to serve the children and continue their education, and we as a faculty have recognized that in this dire situation, technology can be a tool for us to deliver age appropriate educational programming.

We know that being at home is not the same as being in the classroom and we do not expect you to replicate a classroom environment. We recognize the strain of working from home while overseeing small children. Rather, we want to support you to the best of our ability as we work together to maintain some continuity for the children, both academically and emotionally. All teachers, both Early Childhood and Grades, will have office hours that they will or have already shared with you. As a faculty we determined that for Early Childhood, listening to an audio recording of the teacher telling a story would be appropriate in this emergency situation and just as in the Early Childhood classroom, this story will be the same for at least three days before a new one is introduced, as this enables it to become a part of their imaginations and allows them to act out the stories in their play. The Early Childhood teachers distributed packets today with suggested daily rhythms, activities that the children can do on their own, and recipes that the family can make together, along with activity bags which contain other materials you can use at home to replicate some of the typical activities of the kindergarten and preschool. Teachers may also give video instructions for the parents as needed. Please feel free to call your teacher for any guidance you need.

Children in the Grades went home on Friday afternoon with large PCWS tote-bags filled with their Main Lesson books, crayons, beeswax, handwork, pencils, flutes, library books and everything else they would need to work from home. Those Specialty Classes that need demonstration such as Spanish or Music will also be taught remotely through audio or video, while the other Specialty teachers will offer written instructions. We are also being mindful of the total amount of screen time Grades children will experience during this remote schooling, and much of the work will be done offline, through practical activities and in their Main Lesson books, while video, audio and live sessions will provide for moments of class connection and instruction during the day. The fifth graders have been happily joining Google Classroom this week; while it is not ideal, Señora Gomez and the class have found that it is going very well.

I am proud of the work our faculty has done over the past few weeks to prepare for, and now work in, our new reality. Please know that we realize that this kind of learning, for all ages of students, places an added burden on you as parents. Please keep us informed of your challenges, and let your teachers know if your child is experiencing uncharacteristic anxiety or stress. Though we are further apart physically, we are still a community, and we will work together even under these new and challenging circumstances.

Thank you for your trust, patience, and willingness to work with this temporary, unconventional approach to Waldorf education. We hope that you stay safe and healthy and are able to find moments of joy even in these times of trial.

In closing, I would like to share a beautiful poem that came across my email this week.

With my warmest wishes,  
Lark

Lark Bergwin-Anderson  
Faculty Chair  
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*..But,  
They say that in Wuhan after so many years of noise  
You can hear the birds again.  
They say that after just a few weeks of quiet  
The sky is no longer thick with fumes  
But blue and grey and clear.  
They say that in the streets of Assisi  
People are singing to each other  
across the empty squares,  
keeping their windows open  
so that those who are alone  
may hear the sounds of family around them.  
They say that a hotel in the West of Ireland  
Is offering free meals and delivery to the housebound.  
Today a young woman I know  
is busy spreading fliers with her number  
through the neighbourhood  
So that the elders may have someone to call on.*

*Today Churches, Synagogues, Mosques and Temples  
are preparing to welcome  
and shelter the homeless, the sick, the weary  
All over the world people are slowing down and reflecting  
All over the world people are looking at their neighbors in a new way  
All over the world people are waking up to a new reality  
To how big we really are.  
To how little control we really have.  
To what really matters.  
To Love.  
So we pray and we remember that  
Yes there is fear.  
But there does not have to be hate.  
Yes there is isolation.  
But there does not have to be loneliness.  
Yes there is panic buying.  
But there does not have to be meanness.  
Yes there is sickness.  
But there does not have to be disease of the soul  
Yes there is even death.  
But there can always be a rebirth of love.  
Wake to the choices you make as to how to live now.  
Today, breathe.  
Listen, behind the factory noises of your panic  
The birds are singing again  
The sky is clearing,  
Spring is coming,  
And we are always encompassed by Love.  
Open the windows of your soul  
And though you may not be able  
to touch across the empty square,  
Sing.*

Fr. Richard Hendrick, OFM  
March 13th 2020

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Connect with us

