

My Waldorf Year

Planning Guide & Workbook: Southern Hemisphere Edition

by Kristie Burns

My Waldorf Year Planning Guide & Workbook was created to use with The Waldorf Enrichment School Curriculum & Lesson Plans at www.earthschooling.com. However, it can also be used to help you create your own curriculum or to "plug in" various curricula that you are using.

What is this guide?

This guide is what I use to plan my classes each year. I started with schooling my own children using Waldorf. Next I started a co-op with a friend and later I ran a Waldorf Enrichment School with over 40 families. At the same time I was still responsible for cooking, cleaning and all those other parenting chores we all share! So after a few months of planning I realized that if I wanted to accomplish all of the goals we had that I would have to make a plan.

This is not a schedule. This could be used to plan a schedule but it is not that. This is an outline of the basic spiritual goals, Waldorf goals, and other goals we planned for the year. This is also a list of important holidays and events that we celebrate each year. By using this as a guide and by posting this near our schooling area, I can easily *see ahead* to what is coming and plan accordingly. I also use this guide as a pattern for my lesson plans. For me, this is like a "fill in the blanks" Waldorf Enrichment Plan.

When I first started creating my lesson plans online I used this planner as my guide so all my lesson plans online are organized according to this guide. As I add to the lesson plans I also keep this guide in mind. It makes adding to the year easy. By using a pre-set outline I know that I am not repeating lessons at the wrong time or doing too much or not enough of one thing. I can also be confident that I am covering what the children need to be learning at each stage of our homeschooling journey.

For example, I have assigned a few months a year to candle-making. This guarantees that I will cover the art of candle-making and we will explore it, but that I won't be doing it all year and ignoring other important handiwork. Another example would be with how I organize and choose verses each month. By assigning *themes* to each month I can easily add stories and verses to the appropriate month without worrying about duplicating my work. In this guide you will find my charts for daily rhythm, weekly rhythm, monthly rhythm and yearly cycles. I have included an index so you can reference this and find what you need easily and quickly. I recommend printing this out and keeping it in a planning binder and/or posting some of the pages near your homeschooling work-space.

How Does This Fit into the Southern Hemisphere?

These lesson plans were originally created for an international audience at our school in the Southern Hemisphere. We had sun all year, did not experience snow at all, very rarely saw rain and “falling leaves” happened when it became too hot in the summer! Because of this you will find, as you read the rhythm and theme suggestions for each day, month and year, that they are mostly unrelated to season or holiday. When we updated the lesson plans to expand to more people we added in the seasons and holidays. So, the lesson plans you will find were a very solid set of plans without the seasonal and holiday additions. Because you may want to modify a few of our verses and stories I recommend that anyone from the Southern Hemisphere either choose to A. Delete anything that is related to the seasons as they go through the lessons (you can do this because the seasonal additions were actually added later after we used the program successfully for a few years) OR B. Take an hour or two to pre---plan your year and make the following modifications:

1. Start the year according to what month it is. If you do this then you will find plenty of non-seasonal themes for each month, a progressive growth of lessons and the correct holidays, verses and stories for those holidays listed for each month.
2. Browse the verses before you start the year and re-organize them. We are working on a Southern Hemisphere verse book and you could help us create it! If you find any verses that talk about the seasons (this is less than 20% of the month) you should do one of three things:
 - a. Skip them: We have included “too many” verses for each month. This is because we originally ran the program without the seasonal verses and added those in later.
 - b. Save them for the appropriate month: I would keep a one---page list of the months at the front of my planner. When I saw a verse about rain in April but I knew we would need that for December I would just write the name of the verse and the page number it was on in the curriculum under the month of December. That way, when I arrived at December I would know where to find the verses I needed. By taking 30---45 minutes at the very beginning of your year to do this for the year you will have it done for the entire year and you won’t miss anything.
 - c. Change the words in the verse to reflect your culture and season: For example, when there were verses about snow I would talk about visiting a relative and seeing snow or reading in a picture book about the snow. If the verse was about an elephant I might modify it to be a donkey or camel since there were a lot of those in our region. If the verse was about falling leaves I would modify it for the summer to represent leaves falling from dryness. Some of the verses are easy to modify and others are not as easy. If you have a hard time with any please send them my way – I enjoy the challenge! Send any verses you need modified to: CustomerService@TheBEarthInstitute.com.

3. Change the names, seasons and locations in stories. This is very easy and is easier than modifying any verses. We chose most of our stories very carefully so that they could be modified by name or season as all true storytellers do. This means that about 90% of the stories do not depend on the season or person's name at all. For example, a story like "Rapunzel" (in the first grade materials) depends on the name "Rapunzel" but most other stories do not depend on the names at all. Steiner encourages you to change some of the stories to reflect popular names in your own culture. This is one reason you *tell* the story instead of reading it. Secondly, the locations and seasons can also be easily changed in each story. If you find an amazing story that cannot be changed (it HAS to be about rain, for example), you can "file it" the same way you did the verses but this rarely happens. However, most stories can be easily changed. I would do this almost every time we had storytime to reflect the students in my class that day and even the weather outside. I remember one time I found a wonderful story about Santa Claus selling Christmas buns. It was so charming but my students didn't understand Santa Claus, Christmas or the buns so I read the story twice to myself, I remembered the main plot (you can also highlight some main points, if you print it out, take notes on the main points on index cards or use props as reminders) and then re--- told it with more familiar names, foods and locations. If you watch my winter story on the "Free Video" section of the website you will see how I used props in that story to remember the different trees the bird was in.

4. Last, but not least, you can add in any enrichment you want to add. We have enrichment lessons for Buddhists, Hindus and Muslims (with the corresponding holidays) available. We also have some extra verses and stories in Spanish, French, and German. In addition, we have some nice storybooks that contain fairytales and legends from Australia and other Southern Hemisphere locations. You can find these in the Cultural Enrichment files or Extra Reading Book files. You may need to write to us to request the file you need. If you can't find something please ask us before taking a lot of time to look. We are always happy to accept ideas and/or donations for these enrichment files so if you have any cultural traditions, lessons or holidays you want to share please let us know!

Once you do these four simple things you will be ready to go in the Southern Hemisphere! I have also included some notes in the chapters of this book about which months correspond to which seasons in the curriculum so if you don't want to plan the entire year ahead you will know where to find what you need each month. Note that if you are teaching first grade and up you do not need to do anything with the lessons. Since the lessons are already provided in block format and are not related to any season or holiday you can work through the blocks in any way you want to and it does not depend on which hemisphere you live in. The "organization planning" issue only comes up with the preschool and kindergarten curriculum. However, we do also provide some seasonal and holiday materials for first grade, second grade and third grade. Many parents/teachers do not use these. However, if you do want to use the supplemental "large book" that comes with the first, second or third grade materials you will need to adapt them (or eliminate things that don't apply) slightly in the same way you did with the preschool and kindergarten materials.

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Inner Meanings

The Spiritual Base

This is applicable to all cultures, religions and regions of the world including the Southern Hemisphere. The first thing you need to plan before you plan your daily, weekly and yearly schedules is to think about the inner meaning in the work you will be doing with the children. We thought very carefully about this with each story, verse, movement and craft we chose. Some stories took hours to find or create – just for one story – because we had a specific plan for each item we added to the curriculum. We didn't just "cut and paste" any story. Each story, verse and activity was planned after great thought and coordination. Even though we saved you the time doing this we still feel it is important that you are familiar with the thought processes that went into creating this curriculum so you can meditate/think on this each day and keep your focus on the important core reasons you are doing each lesson. It is not always about telling the story perfectly or creating a craft you can display in a museum. There are more important factors we consider when planning the curriculum.

Exposure to Nature and Natural Materials: All toys in the toy room and crafts are made from natural materials. Candles are made from beeswax and not paraffin, tablecloths are cotton and not plastic. Cups are ceramic and not plastic, dress-up costumes are silk, wool and cotton and not package.

Reverence for Nature: This is done by taking nature walks and pointing out things in nature a child may not see. So far this year we have used the branches of a banyan as a swing, we have used a fallen truck as a jungle gym and have watched a line of ants (meters long!) storing food for the winter. Children are welcome to add objects to the nature table and the nature table is designed by the teacher to reflect what is happening in the outside world around them in that season.

Rhythm: The classes are structured on a rhythm and the rhythm flows. There is not a time-set schedule but a motion of "in" and "out" movements. We go from active to quiet and from community to inner play. This teaches the child rhythm on a daily basis. Seasonal activities and world holidays emphasize rhythm on a yearly basis.

Music: music awakens the brain in the younger child. Math abilities, language abilities and more have been shown by researchers and many studies are awakened by exposure to music at a young age. I also integrate education into the music itself by following a formula of learning skills in each month's verse selection. I include: one math song, one movement (coordination and left brain, right brain coordination) song, one language song in Spanish, sign-language, and songs having to do with the season or holiday that month. Some songs include information about nature.

Respect & ritual: Shaping bread at the beginning of the day and eating it for snack help teach the child that food is work and deserves respect. So do other things in life. Real cloth and ceramic utensils are used to teach a child to be careful with the breakable items. Candles are lit and grace is said to nurture the child with ritual and respect.

Useful & purposeful work: Crafts done by mothers and children alike can all be used for a purpose. Crafts are always done by the children or mother and are not pre-prepared or done for the purpose of “hanging on the wall.” Each craft has a deeper purpose. Items like kites, candles, necklaces and pots are formed by the children. Toys and clothing are sewn or knitted by the mothers. Even the painting experiences are done for the purpose of color therapy, learning and coordination. Children learn the beauty of having a skill that they can use to create purposeful and useful things.

Creative Play: Toys and activities are designed so the children can use their imagination and creativity. Stories are told and not usually read from a book. This gives the child more room to imagine and even if props are used the child can later manipulate these own props to re-create the story. Dress-up clothes are usually plain and leave room for creative usage. A piece of silk could be a skirt, a dress, or a pouch. It could be many things! Creative toys are used and electronic toys or toys that only do one thing are discouraged. Even using stones and shells and nuts as toys is encouraged.

Parent-Child interaction: The child learns by what the parent does and not by what the parent says. In the early years (before age 3) the parent is encouraged to let their child see them and participate with them in meaningful tasks such as washing up, cooking, creating things, planting a garden, doing a mother-child Waldorf program, doing laundry, reading and much more. Parents are encouraged to be role models and not playmates or entertainers for their children.

Spirituality: Waldorf does not promote a religion but it does encourage reverence of “god” or the “universe” or “Nature” in a spiritual way by telling stories of saints, saying grace before a meal, and other things. All expressions of spirituality are encouraged and a child is never told to “be quiet” about it. If they have different beliefs than the other children they are encouraged to explain or share. The traditional Waldorf birthday story tells the story of each child as they come down from heaven where they lived with the angels to be with their mother and father.

Art: Much learning in the Waldorf school is done through the art of plays, storytelling, crafts and painting. Learning is integrated INTO these activities to make for a more holistic learning experience. The alphabet is learned through art in the grades.

Diversity: World languages, myths, stories, holidays and much more are explored in the Waldorf schools. Additionally, children are evaluated and “typed” by the teacher (silently – not out loud) and directed in the best ways of learning for their type. They are also encouraged to accept all types that are like them and not like them in ways of thinking. They are encouraged to learn respect for diversity of personality.

Movement: Eurhythmy or Yoga is learned in all the classes as a tool for each person to grown and heal psychically and mentally their entire life. Yoga and Eurhythmy also help the brain to develop and a person to remain more centered and balanced. The alphabet is also learned through movement in the grades.

These same themes are continued through the entire schooling of the child. However, as the child gets older these themes are acted out on different “stages.” While three year olds may do clay sculpture, older children will knit and weave. Three year olds may paint with one or two colors, but the older kids will paint with the entire palette and perhaps even paint scenes from mythology. Three year olds shape bread but older children may make a community soup or cook something more complex. Kindergarteners may play with drums, but the older child will learn recorder and eventually violin. See the list below for more specifics on how the program grows with your child.

The Meaning Behind Waldorf

Once you have your spiritual base established, you need to understand *why* you have decided to follow a certain method of schooling. In my case I was Waldorf-focused so I wrote down some of the reasons behind what I was doing. This was mostly for the parents attending my program, but it was also helpful for me in my reflections because I need to focus on what the inner meaning is behind what I am doing so that when I plan this inner meaning comes through. I want to share this with you as parents and teachers so you recognize the value and thought that went into some of the specific activities we included in the curriculum.

For example, a person walking into a Waldorf classroom might think that Waldorf kids play with wooden toys so they will go to Target and buy some wooden toys and start their co-op with these. But if you know the *meaning* behind the wooden toys then you know that the point of the wooden toys is for children to use something *handmade and natural* (not manufactured). So if you can't afford a nice handmade natural wooden horse you would be doing the child more service by searching for a horse-shaped stick in nature (you would be surprised how easy those are to find). I always take some time every month to reflect on some of the inner meanings in my program.

I have provided some of the meaning behind Waldorf below. However, if you follow a mixture of Waldorf and other methods of schooling you may want to make your own list or add some items to this list below.

Shaping Bread: “Breathing in.” This is the beginning of *every* Waldorf day. The children are allowed to slowly ease into the day and focus their energies on the shaping of the dough and start conversations. This is a time of transition, an analogy to the shaping of the day, a way the children can feel involved in the creation of the school and a wonderful ritual they enjoy eating later. We used to have only one or two different breads each month (this is provided in your curriculum) and the children loved it. But if you want to create a more complex schedule you can also create a schedule based on the grain of each day and put those grains into the bread, you can use our file “Cooking with Kids” to find additional recipes or you can use the grain chart to rotate bread-making with things like making rice balls or warm oatmeal with toppings.

	Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
Planetary Body	Sun	Moon	Mars	Mercury	Jupiter	Venus	Saturn
Color	White	Purple	Red	Yellow	Orange	Green	Blue
Grain	Wheat	Rice	Barley	Millet	Rye	Oats	Corn
Tree	Ash	Cherry	Oak	Elm	Maple	Birch	Conifer
Gem	Ruby	Moonstone	Diamond	Topaz	Sapphire	Agate	Onyx

Nature Walk/Table: “Breathing out.” The nature walk allows the child to notice the weather of the day, of the season and where they are, thus becoming in touch with the environment around them and centering them and connecting them with the universe around them. Objects are placed on the table as an ever-changing display that keeps the classroom in touch with the outside world so children do not become isolated in an artificial environment.

Circle Time. Breathing in.” This is a time for teaching both songs and finger rhymes of a Waldorf nature. Usually rhymes that are seasonal and dealing with nature are used. There are many books filled with rhymes and songs. Usually 3-5 songs/ finger plays are used for each circle time. The parents usually perform with the child and this is a time for the child to use their outward energy and draw “out” of themselves into the group. Sometimes children will want to play instead of doing the songs and that is OK. Some children take a few times to get used to the idea and will eventually join in. As always parents are expected to make sure their children are either participating or at least not disrupting. As a rule, in Waldorf, a child’s talking and whispering and playing alone quietly or with soft noises are ALWAYS accepted. However, shouting, running, pushing or any behavior that brings attention to them instead of the group should be stopped by the parent with a gentle reminder and re-routing of the child’s attention. In some cases a child must be removed from the room by a parent.

Story time: “Breathing in.” At the end of circle time children then change from sitting in a circle and instead sit facing the “storyteller” demonstrating visually and mentally that now is the time to sit and listen and not to play. Instead of sitting in a circle for the story, children are sat in front of the “storyteller” in rows. From ages 1-4 stories are never read but only “told” using finger puppets, wooden figures or hand motions or other natural tools.

Snack Time: “Breathing out” Children are called to snack and during this time the parents discuss topics. One parent or teacher usually set up the snack so the snack is ready and the table is set when people come to the table. The table is ALWAYS set nicely with cloth napkins and cups and bowls made of natural ceramic or wood. There is always a candle lit and a prayer before every meal.

CRAFT: Children Free Play in the Waldorf toy room while parents do a short craft or work on a continuing project.... “Breathing in.” Like a knitting project. Usually the parents agree on a project to do and work a little on it each week. This can be knitting a bunny, Hand sewing a felt shape, making a felt animal, making a doll, making a small quilt or any handwork at all. Older children are sometimes interested in “helping” and they are allowed to do so. This is a good time to teach the older children a craft while the young kids play.

Clean up time: We all sing a clean up song and clean up, inviting the children to participate. Remember, as in all Early childhood education we are simply “modeling” behavior and should not expect the children to fully participate yet. Just picking up one toy is a good start. Toys should always be put in the same place, on a shelf or in a basket, with respect and never thrown or tossed or buried in a toy box.

Mother’s Helping: Children play better and are happier when they see the mother doing meaningful work (I have an article on this that I will pass out when I get it in the mail from my friend who is making photocopies) so it is encouraged for mothers to participate in the program through helping with set-up and clean-up and doing the knitting or other craft project assigned to mothers.

Age Specific Milestones

The is the last stage before you are ready to start planning your rhythms. You need to know at which level your child or children will be working at. I have provided a summary of what each grade focuses on in the Waldorf curriculum. I created a chart of how I interpreted this focus in terms of music, poetry and art. If you combine other methods with Waldorf you may need to add to the chart or revise it.

First Grade

All children are carefully assessed as to whether they are ready to embark on this journey. Are they ready to learn to write and later read and do arithmetic without thwarting some other part of their development? Are the growth forces all still needed for growing and playing or are some growth forces freed so that they can be used for their next tasks? The children around about seven years should have the concentration to build their own vivid inner pictures when being told a story, and through such imagery will continue learning in the following years.

Fairy tales are told by the teacher then retold and dramatized by members of the class. This cultivates the children's imagination. Starting with simple artwork the children learn to draw forms, which lead to letters and numbers. The four basic mathematic processes are introduced: addition, subtraction, multiplication and division. Nature stories provide an imaginative introduction to the natural world. These stories provide the basis for drawing, writing and the beginnings of reading and science. Elementary German and Spanish are introduced through songs and games.

Even simple numbers come to life by the way they are presented. A triangle has a neat quality of "threeness" that is qualitatively different from a square's blocky "fourness." Numbers become more than simply abstractions in sequence.

Second Grade

Second graders are at the age when they begin to have strong likes and dislikes. Eight year olds react strongly to imagery in the fables and in stories of saints. They hear fables and stories of legendary characters such as saints. These stories teach of human fallibility and present a model for overcoming adversity. Reading opens a new world of words, and the children begin to master the multiplication tables. Second graders continue to paint and explore Nature, and present their first dramatic play. They learn to crochet and play the pentatonic flute.

Third Grade

By the third grade, children are beginning to comprehend the difference between self and other and wonder where in the scheme of things they belong. To fortify their growing personal identity, they read creation and Old Testament stories. Around the age of nine comes a very important psychological change. The child has a stronger experience of its own individuality or identity (ego) and therefore begins to question adult authority. It may feel isolated from family and friends and therefore need more sympathy and firmness from teachers and parents. Again, the subjects given to Class Three are carefully chosen and timed to relate to this inner psychological change.

The Hebrew Old Testament stories give the nine-year-old an inner picture of the security of a God who looks after His chosen people. The Old Testament story of the Fall from Paradise is a vivid image of what the nine-year-old is experiencing in its soul. (Other religious traditions may also wish to add things here). In handwork the children crochet a hat, a visible form of something protecting them. In the main lesson they learn about occupations such as house building, farming and traditional crafts. How do farmers provide our food. Unforgettable is an early morning visit to a cowshed with its characteristic sounds and smells, seeing the cows milked, feeling their warm breath, tasting the fresh milk! Farming, housing, building, measurement, and mastery of the multiplication tables and four arithmetic processes provide a practical foundation for scientific study and help ground the children. They go away together to spend a week on a farm. The study of grammar helps them to develop rational thinking. Each child takes up a stringed instrument: violin, viola or cello.

Fourth Grade

From Class Four children have developed to a point where they can be led into the history and geography of their locality. Tumultuous stories of Norse mythology teach about character and individuality in a complex world. Children begin to learn about their place in the surrounding environment with the study of local geography and map making. They write their own compositions and increase math skills by learning fractions and long division. In music they must hold their own in playing or singing a round.

Fifth Grade

Fifth graders begin to come to grips with the history of humanity with the study of ancient cultures from India, Persia, Egypt and Greece. They connect history lessons with their growing athletic prowess in a Greek-style Olympics in the spring. In geography they expand out to the United States and North America. In science they study plant life with botany. The math curriculum now includes decimals, percentages, and practical business math skills, as well as the introduction of geometry. Music, handwork and foreign language study become increasingly challenging.

The study of history brings the child into him or herself by beginning in ancient times and working up to the present day. Geography brings the child into the world by starting locally and expanding to the whole planet.

Sixth Grade

Children at this age are gaining a firmer relationship with the world they inhabit and want a more solid grasp on reality. At twelve, the child experiences another change. At this age the thinking begins to change from the picture building of the child to the intellectual (logical or cause and effect thinking) of the adult. However, it is only beginning, and science makes a memorable gateway to the awakening intellect for the child in pre-puberty. They study geology and begin physics with the exploration of optics and acoustics and the properties of heat, magnetism and electricity. In mathematics they learn to apply the basic processes to practical situations. They study ratios and begin algebra. English covers the writing of business and personal letters. Geography covers Central and South America. Sixth graders learn about the structural basis of modern society with the study of Roman law.

My Waldorf Year for the Southern Hemisphere: August 2019 – July 2020: Version 1

TOPIC	M/Ch 2 & 3	M/Ch 4 & 5	KG/1 st	2nd	3rd
Language	<i>Exposure to languages with simple songs</i>	<i>Start one the basics of one language through songs</i>	Continue language via dialogue and songs	Continue dialogue and songs in language	Dialogue & songs in 1st language. Start 2 nd language
Poetry	Short Poems	Longer Poems	Complex Poem	<i>Story Poems</i>	<i>Two Voices</i>
Watercolor Painting	One Color	One & Two Colors	Two & Three Colors	All Colors	Advanced Watercolor
Drawing	Beeswax Crayons – Explore color	Beeswax Crayons - Technique	<i>Basic Form Drawing</i>	Form Drawing & Mandalas	Advanced Form Drawing Celtic/Arabic
<i>Math</i>	Hand Rhymes – Numbers & <i>beanbag counting</i>	Beanbag counting, Days of the Week, Fingers, Math Rhymes	Math Verses & Lummi Sticks Add, Subtract, Divide & Multiply	Number Pattern Circles, Magic Squares and Leaf Times Tables.	Weights & Measures – Geometry
Paper Skills	Drawing on Paper	Paper Cutting	Simple Paper Folding	Origami	Advanced Origami
Cooking	Orange Juice, Butter, Bread	Basics like Catsup	Mixes and Soups	Salads and Soups	Meals
Spiritual Art	See Nature Work and Handcrafts	See Nature Work and Handcrafts	See Nature Work and Handcrafts	See Nature Work and Handcrafts	Art with a Spiritual Purpose such as Mandalas
Grinding Grain	Grind for Birds	Grind for Cashew Butter	Grind for Muffins	Grind for Bread	
Yarn/ Handwork	Watch mother knit	Watch String pictures & stories	String Games Finger-knitting French Spool	Simple Projects with Needle Knitting	Adv. Projects w/ Crochet & Knitting
Felt Work	Play with felt toys	Make a felt ball	Sewing felt toys	Felt Boarding	Advanced sewing
Instruments	Simple Rhythm	Simple Rhythm	Recorder (1 st)	Recorder/Zither	Zither or Harp
Stories	Repetitive - Puppet Shows Real life stories	Fables – Puppet Shows	Fairytales & Nature Stories	Fables & Heroes, Legends, Nature Stories	Experience of the Self and the Individual.
Grammar & Language	Storytelling Making	Storytelling Letters &	Alphabet in Nature/ Form:	Writing & Reading	Writing & Reading
Finger Rhymes, Rounds and Singing Games	Fun verses & clapping songs	Learning verses using more complex clapping	Circle games	Rounds & complex circle games	4-part rounds and complex circle games
Science	Nature Walks	Nature Walks & Science stories	The Fairyland of Science by Arabella B. Buckley		

Seventh Grade

By seventh grade the young adolescent is beginning to consider larger issues that will shape the course of adult life. Seventh graders study the major changes in civilization of the Renaissance and the Reformation, which are coordinated with principles of science of those times such as mechanics, astronomy and physiology. Geography lessons also focus on Europe. Math covers more advanced algebra. In English the students writing requires deeper levels of thought and personal self-expression. They play on the school's boys and girls basketball teams. The arts--painting, drawing, singing and instrumental music--as well as drama, handwork and movement stay with the children through to eighth grade growing ever more complex and demanding along the way.

Eighth Grade

By eighth grade students are ready to assert themselves more in the world. They study the American and French Revolutions and the Industrial Revolution and their consequences. They are encouraged to form more of their own opinions. They learn about the lives of key figures of the 20th Century and write a research paper. Science and math touch on such diverse fields as organic chemistry, meteorology, ecology, aerodynamics, solid geometry and algebra. At the end of the year, the whole class goes on a field trip to a distant destination. By the time young people have finished all eight grades at a Waldorf school, they understand something about many aspects of the world they inhabit. Words, numbers, and a cross-section of the sciences have been covered. Many subjects have been coordinated with one another so that the student comprehends how different aspects of the world fit together. Most have been introduced through the arts, so that he or she knows them on a feeling as well as purely intellectual level. The young person is prepared, mentally, emotionally, and spiritually to face young adulthood with enthusiasm and confidence.

Grades Nine and Ten

The kindergarten teacher represents to the children that "the world is good," the lower schoolteacher that "the world is beautiful." As one metamorphoses into the next, so too there comes another change in the Upper School. Here the guiding principle is to lead the pupil through the specific nature of the curriculum to the understanding: "the world is true." One urges the pupil through a sense of reverence and responsibility for the world around; a living knowledge, a training of the feeling life through the artistic method, and the strengthening of will impulses towards moral action. It is not in the philosophy of the Rudolf Steiner schools to pressure children to hurry through childhood, but to bring those youthful qualities into adulthood that characterize the human being as a creative individual.

The Four Rhythms

The Daily Rhythm

This was my schedule for the classes I ran as a teacher. My schedule with my own children varies and yours might too. But this gives you a good idea of the thought I put into the rhythm of the day. It helps children if your daily rhythm is very similar every day. I have not included times with these because you may choose to insert your own home activities (like folding clothes together or doing dishes together or doing another child's lesson), you may do these in the morning OR the afternoon only with a group, or you may do these more quickly or more slowly depending on your child, the mood or the day. So the *time* is not important but the *order* is.

ACTIVITY ONE: Arrival (or waking up), free play and settle in

You can also have the child take this time to do their morning chores, get dressed, brush their teeth and other tasks.

ACTIVITY TWO: Bread shaping (Verse: Call to the Bread Table)

You would take this time to do your cooking or bread making with the children using the recipes you find in the curriculum.

ACTIVITY THREE: Movement and Circle Time (Verse: Call to the Circle)

You will use this time to do verses, yoga or movement. These can all be found in the curriculum. We do this after we prepare the food because the food can be cooking while we are doing this and by the time we are done the food will be done and ready for snack time.

ACTIVITY FOUR: Set the table and snack time (Verse: Snack time Prayer)

ACTIVITY FIVE: Nature Walk (Verse: Let's Walk)

You may find activity ideas for this in the curriculum. Other ideas for inspiration are the story of the day, a verse you sang that morning or even a craft. For example, if the craft requires sticks then you will need to gather sticks.

ACTIVITY SIX: Story time (Verse: Fairies of the Story Time)

You will choose one story from the curriculum each week (or every 2-3 days if the child requires more change). The first day you will tell the story, the second day you can tell the story again and let them help by moving the figures around or doing some movement with the story (like a small play). The third day you can paint or do a craft related to the story. In the curriculum we have provided the name of a craft next to many of the stories and the name of a story next to many of the crafts (in the index) so that you can match suitable ones. If we have not provided a match then you can do a painting with that story or play with homemade play-dough for the story, have an extra day of movement, or have the child tell *you* the story. As you can see – if you follow these suggestions you will have many extra stories each month. This is so you can use the program for many years or so you have enough stories to choose from that you can choose the perfect one for your child/class. Keep in mind that we have provided the story but not the method for telling it. Read the tips on storytelling in the “Waldorf Basics” book or watch the video “Storytelling Methods” (free to lifetime members) if you need help with how to tell the stories. Some parents/teachers look at how long the written story is and they get confused thinking the story is too long. However, when telling a story you need to have a lot of background and information so you have substance behind your telling of the story. When you actually tell the story to your audience you may need to shorten it, add fewer details or even change some of the details. You will also want to use the book *Waldorf Watercolor Stories for the Year* for some of your stories. All the stories in this book are very short and simple. In fact, you could choose to use *only* this book for your stories for the year if you wanted to.

ACTIVITY SEVEN: Craft time for Children (Verse: Come Join our Craft)

There are many crafts provided in the curriculum for each month. Choose according to the holiday, season, story you have told, what supplies you have on hand, or even according to what inspires you. Keep in mind that the crafts are designed for a child under seven to do with another person or with direction from another person. In some cases they may be able to do most of the craft with some instruction. In other cases they may only be able to do part of it.

ACTIVITY EIGHT: Mother’s Time/ Free-Play for children in the Waldorf Room

Be sure to include free play-time each day and also allow your child to follow you and “help” you with the natural activities you do each day. Helping parents and teachers clean is part of the child’s education and helps with eye-hand coordination and brain development among other things.

The Weekly Rhythm

As well as having a different activity assigned to each day, I also had a different theme I would meditate on as a teacher each day. Sometimes I would share this theme with the children and sometimes I would just focus on finding ways to enrich that theme through the day.

Weekly Awareness Plan

I would call this a meditation plan but the truth is that sometimes I would just think briefly about the topic of the day and would be inspired by that brief thought the rest of the day. Other days I would sit and reflect on the topic in more detail and depth. Keep in mind that these were themes for ME, the teacher to reflect on each day and this list came from MY ideas of what I wanted to bring to the children and what I felt was important to them. You need to make your own awareness plan or you can use mine to start out with.

From “The Seven Laws of Spiritual Parenting” By Deepak Chopra

Monday: We are all here for a reason – finding ways we are special and unique

Tuesday: There is potential in everything – find ways nature shows potential

Wednesday: Giving – the more you give the more you receive

Thursday: You can change the future – show ways that choices you made have helped

Friday: Work can be fun – don’t fight life

Saturday: Intention and wishing can be powerful tools

Sunday: Enjoy life – detach in some ways and feel balanced about the good and bad.

From Earthschooling

Monday: Harmony & Developing Balance

Tuesday: Mindfulness

Wednesday: Being of Service

Thursday: Fostering Self-Reliance Friday: Appreciating Beauty

Saturday: Nourishing Compassion

Sunday: Creating Joy

Weekly “Special Days”

There are some things that you don’t need or even want to do every day. When this is the case, it is best to put these things on a weekly rotation so there is still a sense of rhythm, in the child’s life. Here is a sample from my old school:

Monday: Introduce our new story or stories

Tuesday: Make a special bread (the rest of the week we make plain bread)

Wednesday: Spanish lesson

Thursday: Cook lunch together

Friday: Field trip or longer nature walk

You can also create rhythms like this for the classroom or house itself so that you – the teacher, can stay on schedule! Here is an example of mine:

Monday: Shopping for home & class & business

Tuesday: Clean pet cages

Wednesday: Clean the bathrooms

Thursday: Sweep the floors & Scrub

Friday: Organizing day

The Monthly Rhythm

Every month we had a rhythm as well as a weekly and daily rhythm. As you look over my lesson plan guides and the vast amount of material I have provided or that you have yourself, you can use a monthly rhythm block to help you focus each week. Some things you will want to focus on or a week and other things you may want to focus on for 4-6 weeks. These are called “lesson blocks.” The E-books I sell about woodworking, knitting and other topics are meant to be used as lesson blocks. Various units of study in my lesson plans or in your own lesson plans can be used as lesson blocks too.

Here is an example of how lesson blocks can work in the month:

Craft Blocks for the Month:

Week One: Beeswax Block Crayon Art Technique (Progressive)

Week Two: Waldorf Watercolor Painting (Various Techniques and Color Skills)

Week Three: Felt work Craft

Week Four: Craft

Week Five: Craft

Story Blocks for the Month:

Week One: Tell a Story (same story both days)

Week Two: Do a Play

Week Three: Puppet Show Story

Week Four: A Story POEM

Week Five: Read a Book

Science Blocks for the Month:

Week One – Four: The water cycle

Math Blocks for the Month:

Week One – Four: Basic Math Concepts: Addition, Subtraction, Multiplication and Division

The Yearly Cycle [2019-2020]

There are some activities I scheduled over the year based on seasonal or holiday themes. You may want to add or subtract from this list. I indicated which items are traditional Waldorf and which holidays are “extras”. We had a very international student body so, as Steiner recommends, I included celebrations that “honored all members of our community” – that is why I have so many extra holidays listed. I have left them here for you, because you may also find yourself working with or befriending families of different cultures. You will notice, as a member of the Southern Hemisphere that the majority of the themes we chose for each month *do not depend on a season or holiday*. And it is the themes below that we used to create each month’s lesson plans. We have also listed these themes in your curriculum so as you start each month you can see what we were focusing on for that month. For example, if you quickly glance at January you can see that the main themes are animals, the moon and the solar and lunar calendars. We have a few items related to ice and snow but they are not the main themes of the month. This makes lesson planning so much easier for members of the Southern Hemisphere. As a parent or teacher in the Southern Hemisphere I would recommend printing out the next few pages and putting them in your binder OR (if these are already printed out) putting these pages at the beginning part of your binder so you know where to find the seasonal themes you may need. For example, if your spring time is in January then you will still be using the lessons from January but you may want to browse the guide below to see where you can find some spring stories and verses to “add in” to January. You do not need to search for these stories. We have sorted them for you below. So if the month below says that “spring” or “flowers” are a theme then you will find a few verses, crafts and stories about those themes below. You do not need to worry that they are also in another month. If the theme is not listed below in that month it is very unlikely you will find stories outside of that theme for the month. So this guide below is very useful to anyone doing lessons in the Southern Hemisphere!

Another popular question we get is “Our school year does not start in August in the Southern Hemisphere so when do I start the lessons?”

We *still* recommend you follow the lessons according to the month you are in. So if you are in the month of January then open up the January lessons. We used to recommend that people start with August and then insert holidays and seasons according to our “sorting” method above, but as you can see that is much less efficient than the method we are currently suggesting. Some parents in the past have also tried to use the “corresponding” seasons method. For example, since we have spring in April and they have spring in August they will use the April lesson plans in August. Since our lesson plans do not rely on the seasons this only creates a situation where the holidays are off---kilter and the lessons are out of order and go “back and forth” or seem mixed up. So we do realize there are three ways to adapt these plans. From experience we recommend the “Go by the Real Month” method. Using that method all you have to do is follow the four steps we outlined in the first pages and you will be “good to go”. It makes it so much easier!

When you start late in the year or as a Southern Hemisphere member working by month you *should not be concerned that the alphabet or numbers are out of order*. During the preschool and kindergarten years the children are only being gently exposed to these concepts and are not expected to learn the order of the numbers or the alphabet and are not expected to understand the progression. They are too young for formal lessons. So any lessons having to do with numbers or letters should be approached only very gently and not as a formal lesson. Sometimes it is hard for the parent or teacher to see the numbers and letters out of order. This bothers them so much! However, keep in mind that to your child, these are new and exciting shapes and concepts – they have no meaning beyond that. In fact, by teaching them out of order, it actually helps you back away from the “meaning” we all put on these numbers and letters and allows you to focus more on the form and individual beauty or concept of each letter and number. This is all the child should be doing in the preschool and kindergarten years—being introduced to the general form and concept.

After you print out the monthly guide below be sure to add in your own themes for the month based on your own country, culture, religion or even an upcoming event. For example, we had an exhibit on Ancient Egypt come to town in May one year so we added that to our themes for the month of May.

Note that August is the only exception to the flexibility of themes. We had to have at least one month as a “starting point” for the year so we included that as a theme in the month of August. I recommend you use some of those themes from August *with* whatever month you start with (you can just browse August and take things from it) instead of starting with August. When it does come time for you to do the month of August you can use the handwork themes instead of the monthly themes to guide you for that month. And, if at any time, you run out of themes for the month or have a “weak month” for themes, as with August, you can simply open up one of the “Enrichment Camp” lesson blocks and use those instead. So, for example, if you start the year in January or March and insert some items from August to cover the theme of “starting” and then you arrive at August and find you have “used up” a lot of the activities you can then get out the book “Waldorf Watercoloring” or “Storytelling with Kids” or “Woodworking with Kids” and focus on one of those blocks for the month. Each of those blocks includes verses, stories and crafts so you can easily substitute a lesson block for any month or use it as a supplement.

August [2019]

Other Holidays

Neil Armstrong's Birthday 5th

Hiroshima/Nagasaki anniversary 6th – 9th 1945

Eid al-Adha 12th

Opening of Panama Canal anniversary 15th 1914

Islamic New Year 1st to 31st

Amelia Earhart complete her legendary flight this month in 1932

Themes

Crops & Harvest

Prepare for Fall

Prepare for School

Southern Hemisphere Themes

How far are we from harvest time? What are we doing to prepare?

What season is coming? How will we prepare for this season?

Where are we in the school year? Do we need to do review? Reorganize our day? Plan for year end activities?

Handwork Lesson Blocks for this Month

Week 1: Nature Games

Week 2: Woodworking Projects

Week 3: Cooking

Week 4: Organizing

September [2019]

Main Waldorf Holidays

Spring Equinox 23rd

Michaelmas 29th

Other Holidays

Father's Day 1st

Tomie dePaola's Birthday 15th

Mexican Independence Day 16th

Respect for the Aged Day 17th

Harvest Day 24th

Shel Silverstein's Birthday 25th

Johnny Appleseed's Birthday 26th

Caravaggio's Birthday 28th

Native American Day 28th

Hippocrates' Birthday was this month in 460 BCE

Themes

Angels

Dragons

Leaves & Apples

Bees & Honey

Southern Hemisphere Themes

Angels

Dragons

Leaves & Apples

Bees & Honey

Handwork Lesson Blocks for this Month

Introduction to Waldorf Watercolor Painting

Introduction to Finger-Knitting and Knitting

Parent's Craft for this Month

Knit a Nature Bag

October [2019]

Main Waldorf Holidays

Feast Day of St. Francis of Assisi 4th

Halloween 31st

Additional Themes and Holidays

Mahatma Gandhi's Birthday 2nd

Thanksgiving in Canada 8th

Indigenous Peoples' Day 8th

UN Day 24th

Pablo Picasso's Birthday 25th

Statue of Liberty dedicated 28th

Mother Teresa won the Nobel Peace Prize this month in 1979

Themes

Halloween

Saint Francis

Harvest

Southern Hemisphere Themes

Playing Dress-Up/Costumes

How many days until harvest? How do we know? Can we harvest anything now? Harvest can happen all year if we have indoor plants too!

Handwork Lesson Blocks for this Month

Watercolor Painting

Spool and French Knitting

November [2019]

Main Waldorf Holidays

Martinmas 11th

Thanksgiving 27th

Other Holidays

Georgia O'Keeffe's Birthday 15th

Suez Canal was opened in Egypt 17th 1869

Mark Twain's Birthday 30th

Themes

Peace

Giving Thanks

Southern Hemisphere Themes

Peace

Giving Thanks

Handwork Lesson Blocks for this Month

Embroidery and Cross-Stitch

Parent's Craft for this Month

Weave a Placemat for Thanksgiving

December [2019]

Main Waldorf Holidays

Advent 1st – 24th

Saint Nicholas' Day 6th

Saint Lucy's Day 13th

Summer Solstice 21st

Christmas 25th

Additional Holidays

Hanukkah 22nd – 30th

Kwanzaa 26th – 1st

Johannes Kepler's Birthday 27th

Henri Matisse's Birthday 31st

Themes

Snow & Ice

Heroes & Saints

Fairies & Gnomes

Southern Hemisphere Themes

Keeping Cool with Ice in the Summer

Heroes & Saints

Fairies & Gnomes

Handwork Lesson Blocks for this Month

Grinding Grains Sewing Basics

Southern Hemisphere Parent's Craft for this Month

Knit cool cotton slippers for wearing in the classroom in the summer!

January [2020]

Main Waldorf Holidays

Western Calendar New Year 1st

Three Kings Day 6th

Other Holidays

Martin Luther King Day 20th

Chinese Lunar New Year (Year of the Rat) 25th

Mozart's Birthday 25th

Themes

Animals (Chinese Calendar Theme)

Moon

Lunar & Solar Calendars

Snow & Ice

Southern Hemisphere Themes

Animals (Chinese Calendar Theme)

Moon

Lunar & Solar Calendars

Keeping Cool with Ice in the Summer

Handwork Lesson Blocks for this Month

Candle Basics

Parent's Craft for this Month

Make a Doll

February [2020]

Main Waldorf Holidays

Candlemas 2nd

Valentine's Day 14th

Mardi Gras 25th

Other Holidays

Saint Brigid's Day 1st

Groundhog Day 2nd

Setsubun 3rd

Copernicus' Birthday 19th

Losar 24th – 26th

Themes

Love

Animals (Chinese Calendar Theme)

Southern Hemisphere Themes

Love

Animals (Chinese Calendar Theme)

Handwork Lesson Blocks for this Month

Candles Part Two

Paper

Felt Basics

Parent's Craft for this Month

Felt Animals

March [2020]

Main Waldorf Holidays

Saint Patrick's Day 17th

Autumn Equinox 19th

Other Holidays

Hinamatsuri 3rd

International Women's Day 8th

Women's Day in China 8th

Ides of March 15th

Nowruz 19th

Robert Frost's Birthday 26th

Houdini's Birthday 24th

Van Gogh's Birthday 30th

Themes

Wind

The Irish

Picnics

Southern Hemisphere Themes

Wind

The Irish

Picnics

Handwork Lesson Blocks for this Month

Candles Part Three

Herb Basics

Felt Part Two

Parent's Craft for this Month

Make butterfly Wings for Child

April [2020]

Main Waldorf Holidays

April Fools' Day 1st

Easter 12th

Earth Day 22nd

May Eve 30th

Other Holidays

Thomas Jefferson's Birthday 13th

Leonardo Da Vinci's Birthday 15th

Joan Miró's Birthday 20th

Ramadan starts 23rd

John James Audubon's Birthday 26th

Themes

Recycling

The Earth

Water & Mud

Growth & Growing/Renewal

Southern Hemisphere Themes

Recycling

The Earth

Water & Mud

Composted Leaves

Where in the growth/renewal cycle are we? What do falling leaves and dying plants have to do with growth and renewal? They have to die before they can grow again and be renewed!

Handwork Lesson Blocks for this Month

Herbs Part Two

Sewing Part Two Woodworking

Parent's Craft for this Month

Knit Rabbits or Felt Chickens

May [2020]

Main Waldorf Holidays

May Day 1st

Mayfair

Other Holidays

Cinco de Mayo 5th

Mother's Day 10th

Ramadan ends 23rd

Themes

Song & Dance

Mothers & Mentors

Joy & Dancing Flowers

Southern Hemisphere Themes

Song & Dance

Mothers & Mentors

Joy & Dancing Flowers

Handwork Lesson Blocks for this Month

Crochet

Drawing

May Baskets & Maypole Weaving

Sewing Part Three

Soap & Handcrafts with Flowers

Embroidery Part Two

Parent's Craft for this Month

Felt Dolls

June [2020]

Main Waldorf Holidays

Winter Solstice 20th

Other Holidays

Peter Paul Rubens' Birthday 28th

Themes

The Sun

Southern Hemisphere Themes

How is the sun different for you in the winter compared to the summer? Some examples might be: “we don’t lay out to suntan in the winter” or “in the winter I am always looking for the sun to come out and warm me but in the summer I am always looking for shade.”

“Winter Camp” Lesson Blocks for this Month

Week 1: Rocks

Week 2: Movement

Week 3: Carving

Week 4: Sand

July [2020]

Main Waldorf Holidays

Aphelion Day 4th

Other Holidays

Bastille Day 14th

Rembrandt's Birthday 15th

First moon landing anniversary 16th 1969

Pioneer Day 24th

Eid al-Fitr 30th – 31st

Themes

Campfires & Camping

Travel & Saying Goodbye

Good Friends

Southern Hemisphere Themes

Fireplaces, Firepits, & Campfires to Keep Warm in the Winter

Travel & Saying Goodbye

Good Friends

“Winter Camp” Lesson Blocks for this Month

Week 1: Weaving

Week 2: Survival Skills

Week 3: Making Games

Week 4: Publishing (handmade books)

Holiday Details [2019-2020]

We have included a list of holidays and their descriptions in the following pages. As we mentioned before, we do have enrichment materials available if your holiday is not listed. Some holidays, like Christmas, do not change. Other holidays, like the Chinese New Year, do change each year. I recommend finding an online holiday calendar and printing it out for the year or purchasing a calendar with extended holidays listed on it. Please proceed to the next page to read more about the holidays....

Eid Al-Adha – August 12th, 2019

Eid Al-Adha signals the end of the Hajj time and the beginning of the Islamic New Year. Everyone is expected to have an animal slaughtered – usually a sheep – and distribute the meat to the poor. Families get together to share meals, the children get coins and money and everyone wears new clothes. The Hajj was ten days where Muslims visit Mecca and do a number of rituals to honor Abraham and his second wife, Hajar and their establishment of the concept of “one God” in a nation previously ruled by the concept of “many gods.” Pilgrimage is done every year to illustrate the universal concept and unity people have under one God. For this reason many Muslims come from around the globe to meet at Mecca – millions every year. Hajj is also the fifth pillar of Islam. The five pillars of Islam are duties every Muslim has.

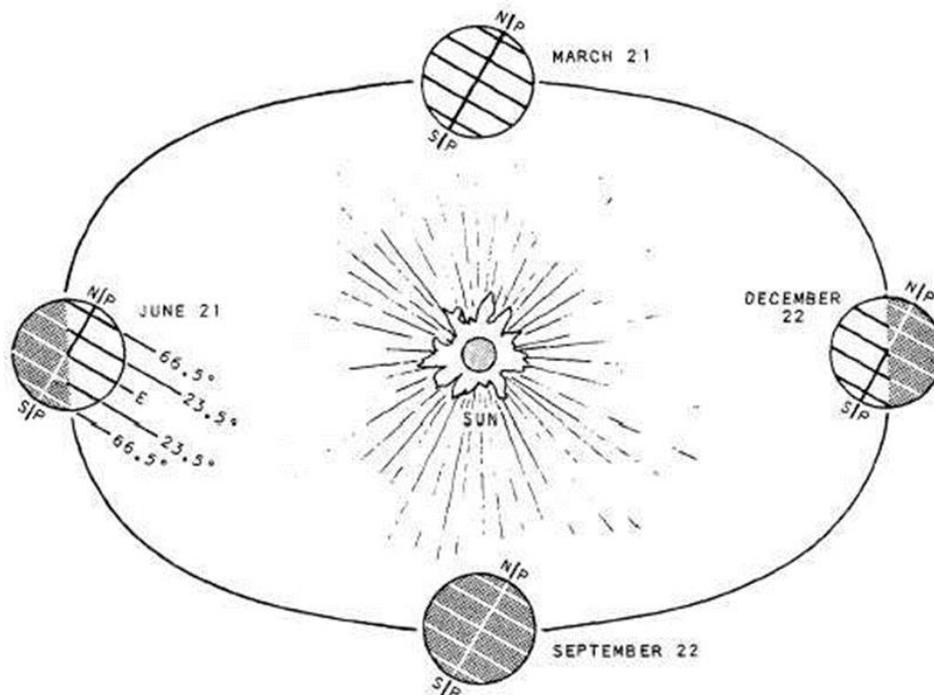
Father’s Day – September 1st, 2019

Mrs. John B. Dodd, of Washington, first proposed the idea of a "Father’s Day" in 1909. Mrs. Dodd wanted a special day to honor her father, William Smart. William Smart, a Civil War veteran, was widowed when his wife (Mrs. Dodd's mother) died in childbirth with their sixth child. Mr. Smart was left to raise the newborn and his other five children by himself on a rural farm in eastern Washington state. It was after Mrs. Dodd became an adult that she realized the strength and selflessness her father had shown in raising his children as a single parent.

The first Father's Day was observed on June 19, 1910 in Spokane Washington. At about the same time in various towns and cities across American other people were beginning to celebrate a "Father’s Day." In 1924 President Calvin Coolidge supported the idea of a national Father's Day. Finally in 1966 President Lyndon Johnson signed a presidential proclamation declaring the 3rd Sunday of June as Father's Day.

Spring Equinox – September 23rd, 2019

Scientifically known as the VERNAL EQUINOX, when Earth's axis is perpendicular to the Sun's rays. Spring begins in the Northern Hemisphere and fall begins in the Southern Hemisphere.



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The Spring Equinox is also known as: Alban Eilir, Eostar, Eostre, Feast of Annunciation of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Festival of Trees, Lady Day, NawRuz, No Ruz, Ostara, Ostra, Rites of Spring, and the Vernal Equinox. This is a time of beginnings, of action, and of tending ritual gardens. The colors for the spring nature table are light green, lemon yellow and pale Traditional Foods for this day are hard boiled eggs, honey cakes and the 1st fruits of the season. Traditional Scents for this day are: African violet, jasmine, rose, sage and strawberry. Traditional gemstones for this day are amethyst, aquamarine, bloodstone and red jasper.

Michaelmas – September 29th, 2019

In the Christian tradition, Michaelmas Day, perhaps more formally known as the Feast of St Michael the Archangel, was one of the most important days of the year. Although not quite so highly regarded as Christmas Day or Easter Sunday, it ranked alongside Shrove Tuesday, Martinmas Day, Rogation Sunday and others of similar status. Falling on 29 September, Michaelmas differs from most of the other saints' days in that it honors a spirit and not a human being. This St Michael is mentioned in the Bible on several occasions where he and his band of angels fight the dragon, which symbolizes the eternal fight of good versus evil. Highly popular in the middle ages, he was depicted in art as a winged and handsome young man clad either in white garments, or in armor and carrying either a lance or a shield. He is the patron saint of knights, grocers and of Normandy in France. Regarded as the leader of all the angels, it is this St Michael who will sound the trumpet to command the dead to arise on the Last Day.

Saint Francis' Day – October 4th, 2019

Christian recognition of service to people and appreciation of the natural world, as practiced by St Francis and the Franciscan Monastic Order which he founded. This is one story of Saint Francis that is a favorite in the Waldorf traditions...Father Francis and his companions were making a trip through the Spoleto Valley near the town of Bevagna. Suddenly, Francis spotted a great number of birds of all varieties. There were doves, crows and all sorts of birds. Swept up in the moment, Francis left his friends in the road and ran after the birds, who patiently waited for him. He greeted them in his usual way, expecting them to scurry off into the air as he spoke. But they moved not.

Filled with awe, he asked them if they would stay awhile and listen to the Word of God. He said to them: "My brother and sister birds, you should praise your Creator and always love him: He gave you feathers for clothes, wings to fly and all other things that you need. It is God who made you noble among all creatures, making your home in thin, pure air. Without sowing or reaping, you receive God's guidance and protection." At this the birds began to spread their wings, stretch their necks and gaze at Francis, rejoicing and praising God in a wonderful way according to their nature. Francis then walked right through the middle of them, turned around and came back, touching their heads and bodies with his tunic.

Then he gave them his blessing, making the sign of the cross over them. At that they flew off and Francis, rejoicing and giving thanks to God, went on his way. Later, Francis wondered aloud to his companions why he had never preached to birds before. And from that day on, Francis made it his habit to solicitously invoke all birds, all animals and reptiles to praise and love their Creator. And many times during Francis' life there were remarkable events of Francis speaking to the animals. There was even a time when St. Francis quieted a flock of noisy birds that were interrupting a religious ceremony! Much to the wonder of all present, the birds remained quiet until Francis' sermon was complete.

Halloween – October 31st, 2019

Halloween is one of the oldest holidays with origins going back thousands of years. The holiday we know as Halloween has had many influences from many cultures over the centuries. From the Roman's Pomona Day, to the Celtic festival of Samhain, to the Christian holidays of All Saints and All Souls Days.

Hundreds of years ago in what is now Great Britain and Northern France, lived the Celts. The Celts worshipped nature and had many gods, with the sun god as their favorite. It was "he" who commanded their work and their rest times, and who made the earth beautiful and the crops grow. The Celts celebrated their New Year on November 1st. It was celebrated every year with a festival and marked the end of the "season of the sun" and the beginning of "the season of darkness and cold."

On October 31st after the crops were all harvested and stored for the long winter the cooking fires in the homes would be extinguished. The Druids, the Celtic priests, would meet in the hilltop in the dark oak forest (oak trees were considered sacred). The Druids would light new fires and offer sacrifices of crops and animals. As they danced around the fires, the season of the sun passed and the season of darkness would begin.

When the morning arrived the Druids would give an ember from their fires to each family who would then take them home to start new cooking fires. These fires would keep the homes warm and free from evil spirits. The November 1st festival was called Samhain (pronounced "sow-en"). The festival would last for 3 days. Many people would parade in costumes made from the skins and heads of their animals. This festival would become the first Halloween.

During the first century the Romans invaded Britain. They brought with them many of their festivals and customs. One of these was the festival know as Pomona Day, named for their goddess of fruits and gardens. It was also celebrated around the 1st of November. After hundreds of years of Roman rule the customs of the Celtic's Samhain festival and the Roman Pomona Day mixed becoming 1 major fall holiday.

The next influence came with the spread of the new Christian religion throughout Europe and Britain. In the year 835 AD the Roman Catholic Church would make November 1st a church holiday to honor all the saints. This day was called All Saint's Day, or Hallowmas, or All Hallows. Years later the Church would make November 2nd a holy day. It was called All Souls Day and was to honor the dead. It was celebrated with big bonfires, parades, and people, dressing up as saints, angels and devils.

But the spread of Christianity did not make people forget their early customs. On the eve of All Hallows, Oct. 31, people continued to celebrate the festivals of Samhain and Pomona Day. Over the years the customs from all these holidays mixed. October 31st became known as All Hallow Even, eventually All Hallow's Eve and then Halloween. The Halloween we celebrate today includes all of these influences, Pomona Day's apples, nuts, and harvest, the Festival of Samhain's black cats, magic, evil spirits and death, and the ghosts, skeletons and skulls from All Saint's Day and All Soul's Day.

Martinmas – November 11th, 2019

According to the most famous story of the saint, Martin was a Roman soldier who was traveling one cold winter night when he saw a beggar in the streets. Even though Martin felt frozen to his toes, he was compelled to cut his cloak in two and give one of the halves to the beggar. That night, in a dream, he saw Christ clothed in the piece of the cloak he'd given the beggar. Afterward, Martin was less interested in the business of battle. When Martin finally left the service with an honorable discharge, he founded a number of monasteries and was elected Bishop of Tours in 371. According to the legend, Martin did not want to be elected, and tried to escape by hiding in a barn full of geese. However, the geese gave him away! Ergo, it's tradition to eat roast goose on St. Martin's feast day. Here's a more in-depth blog entry about St. Martin and his feast day (called Martinmas).

Thanksgiving – November 27th, 2019

Throughout history mankind has celebrated the bountiful harvest with Thanksgiving ceremonies. Before the establishment of formal religions many ancient farmers believed that their crops contained spirits which caused the crops to grow and die. Many believed that these spirits would be released when the crops were harvested and they had to be destroyed or they would take revenge on the farmers who harvested them. Some of the harvest festivals celebrated the defeat of these spirits. Harvest festivals and thanksgiving celebrations were held by the ancient Greeks, the Romans, the Hebrews, the Chinese, and the Egyptians.

The Greeks: The ancient Greeks worshipped many gods and goddesses. Their goddess of corn (actually all grains) was Demeter who was honored at the festival of Thesmophoria held each autumn. On the first day of the festival married women (possibility connecting childbearing and the raising of crops) would build leafy shelters and furnish them with couches made with plants. On the second day they fasted. On the third day a feast was held and offerings to the goddess Demeter were made - gifts of seed corn, cakes, fruit, and pigs. It was hoped that Demeter's gratitude would grant them a good harvest.

The Romans: The Romans also celebrated a harvest festival called Cerelia, which honored Ceres their goddess of corn (from which the word cereal comes). The festival was held each year on October 4th and offerings of the first fruits of the harvest and pigs were offered to Ceres. Their celebration included music, parades, games and sports and a thanksgiving feast.

The Chinese: The ancient Chinese celebrated their harvest festival, Chung Ch'ui, with the full moon that fell on the 15th day of the 8th month. This day was considered the birthday of the moon and special "moon cakes," round and yellow like the moon, would be baked. Each cake was stamped with the picture of a rabbit, as it was a rabbit, not a man, which the Chinese saw on the face of the moon.

The Egyptians: The ancient Egyptians celebrated their harvest festival in honor of Min, their god of vegetation and fertility. The festival was held in the springtime, the Egyptian's harvest season. The festival of Min featured a parade in which the Pharaoh took part. After the parade a great feast was held. Music, dancing, and sports were also part of the celebration. When the Egyptian farmers harvested their corn, they wept and pretended to be grief-stricken. This was to deceive the spirit which they believed lived in the corn. They feared the spirit would become angry when the farmers cut down the corn where it lived.

The United States: In 1621, after a hard and devastating first year in the New World the Pilgrim's fall harvest was very successful and plentiful. There was corn, fruits, vegetables, along with fish which was packed in salt, and meat that was smoke cured over fires. They found they had enough food to put away for the winter. The Pilgrims had beaten the odds. They built homes in the wilderness, they raised enough crops to keep them alive during the long coming winter, and they were at peace with their Indian neighbors.

Advent – December 1st, 2019 to December 24th, 2019

Christian time of preparation for observing the birth of Jesus Christ. Advent begins on the Sunday nearest November 30 and is the beginning of the Christian worship year. Advent is observed with the lighting of advent candles, display of wreaths, and special ceremonies. Advent also anticipates the coming again to earth of Jesus Christ. The season continues through December 24.

Advent traditionally celebrates the miracle of Jesus birth. The Waldorf schools celebrate with an Advent Spiral every year. The Advent Spiral, like the winter festivals of many cultures, is about finding light in the darkness. Families enter a room which is dark and filled with a mood of wonder and quiet anticipation. A large spiral path of evergreen boughs adorned with rocks, plants and flowers is laid on the floor. In the center of the spiral is put a central candle. Golden stars are interspersed along the edges of the green spiral path. Each child walks a simple spiral path to the center candle, lights another candle, and returns to the outside. The graceful path carries the image that every human being must make; a journey to an inner place; where we can find a light to carry back into the world to help us in our own journey. Additional information on the Advent celebration may be found at: Advent is the season preceding Christmas during which Christians await the arrival of the Christ child. It is a time of quiet introspection, meditative searching, and joyful anticipation. In other traditions as well, this season of shortening days and lengthening nights is a time for reflecting on and honoring the past, looking to the future, and searching for inner light in a period of outer darkness. The Advent Spiral is being used by many churches today as well as Waldorf schools.

What are the origins of the Advent Spiral?

This quote pretty much sums it all up: “As a universal symbol the Spiral/Labyrinth appears throughout history dating some 4,500 years and appears cross-culturally over the face of our world throughout our known history.” The meaning usually associated with the advent spiral today is more specific, however.

In some Waldorf schools it symbolizes finding light in the darkness. In other schools and churches walking the spiral as an individual carries the image that every human being must make; a journey to an inner place; where we can find a light to carry back into the world to help us in our own journey. The labyrinth is said to be nondenominational because it can be related to many different religions and cultures and because it represents man’s journey on his own spiritual path within his religion, rather than the path of one specific religion. There are many different kinds of spiral walks. The simplest is the spiral, however, some spirals are modified in to different or more intricate shapes. Some of the earliest forms of modified spirals, also known as labyrinths, are found in Greece, dating back to 2500-2000 B.C.E. This labyrinth is called the Cretan labyrinth or classical seven-circuit labyrinth. So much a part of the fabric of this early society was the labyrinth, that it was embossed on coins and pottery. Early Christian labyrinths date back to 4th century, a basilica in Algeria.

Saint Nicholas' Day – December 6th, 2019

Christian celebration of the birth of Saint Nicolas, patron saint of children and role model for gift giving. Many churches named for this saint who is also the Dutch version of Santa Claus.

Saint Lucy's Day – December 13th, 2019

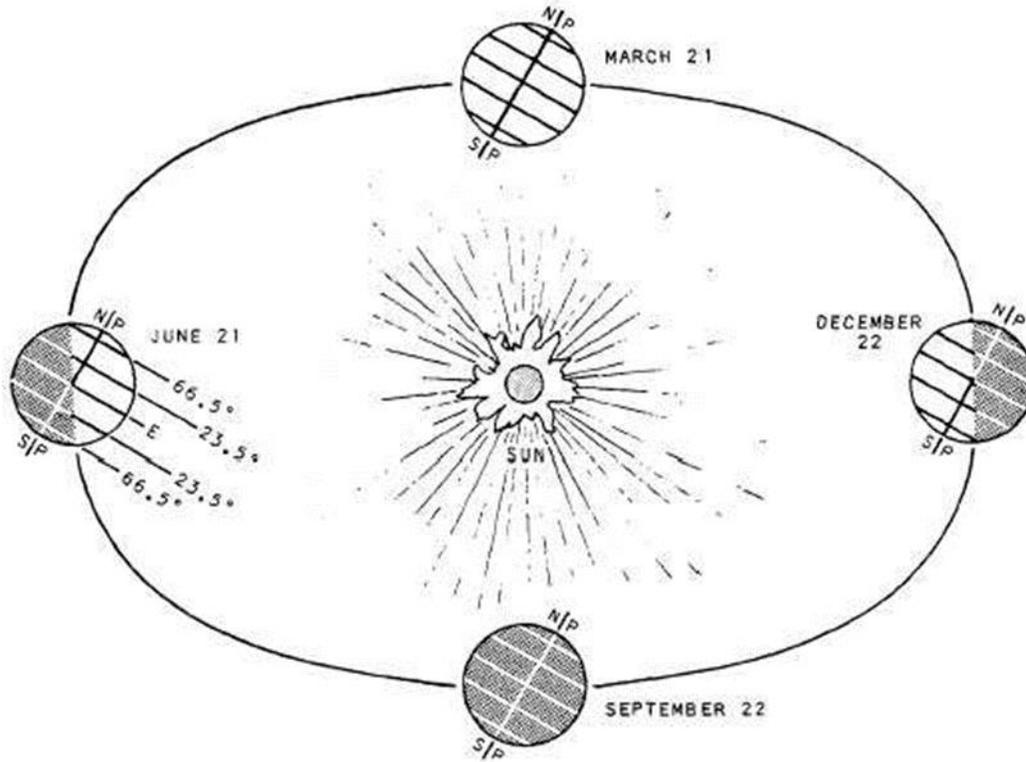
According to legend, Lucia was a medieval saint who carried food and drink to hungry folk in the province of Värmland during a period of famine. She was seen across Lake Vänern with her white gown and crown of lights. Today's costume has the same gown and crown. The Lucia legend is said to have originated in Syracuse on the island of Sicily. A young girl, about to be a bride, gave her entire dowry to the poor of her village and admitted that she had become a Christian. She was accused of witchcraft and burned at the stake on December 13, 304 A.D.

Much later in history, the early Church made a saint out of her - Santa (Saint) Lucia. Italian artists sometimes picture her as a blind girl holding a lamp. She is a patron saint for Italian fishermen and she is said to help guide them home through the rough seas during a storm. There are many legends about her and in each one Lucia stands as a symbol of light and hope to all mankind. Santa Lucia's coming begins the feasting, merriment, singing and the spirit of friendliness and goodwill that lasts all through the holidays.

In 1927, a prominent newspaper arranged for a Lucia competition and that is when the tradition started becoming more widespread and popular. This is how each "town" Lucia and the "Country's" Lucia are chosen. The "crowning" of the "town" Lucia takes place on the First Sunday of Advent after the raising of the Christmas tree in the center of the town square. This is also the first "Christmas Decoration Sunday." This means that all of the stores decorate for Christmas in their store front windows. Mostly all of the town's population gathers downtown for this event and they walk up and down the streets checking out the new decorations in the storefront windows. The "town" Lucia spreads a lot of joy by visiting all of the hospitals and all of the senior citizens' homes from the first of Advent until Christmas, making sure nobody is left out. Lucia brings a message of lighter times to come during the darkest time of the year. It is a very festive atmosphere, full of good feelings, hope, and expectations.

Summer Solstice – December 21st, 2019

Scientifically, this is when the earth's axis is inclined $23\frac{1}{2}^{\circ}$ toward the Sun and the Sun has reached its northernmost zenith at the Tropic of Cancer. Summer officially commences in the Northern Hemisphere; winter begins in the Southern Hemisphere.



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Also known as Midsummer's Day, it is believed that whatever is dreamt of on this night will come true for the dreamer. Traditional foods for this day are fresh vegetables, summer fruits, and pumpernickel bread. Traditional scents for this day are lemon, myrrh, pine, rose and wisteria. Traditional gemstones for this day are any green stones (i.e.: emerald and jade).

The third Saturday of June is celebrated as Midsummer Day by the Swedes who eat herring, drink schnapps and dance. This year it coincides with the actual solstice. Girls put seven flowers under their pillows to dream of their future husbands. Close friends and family have a celebratory feast on this date and give blessings to Mother Nature so that the balance between give and take is equal on both sides. It is our time to give back to Mother Nature. Celebration of the Solstice lasts for about three days. It begins on Midsummer Night and continues for two more days after that. It is Druidic in origin.

Hanukah – December 22nd, 2019 to December 30th, 2019

Every year between the end of November and the end of December, Jewish people around the world celebrate the holiday of Chanukah, the Festival of Lights. Chanukah begins on the 25th day of the Hebrew month of Kislev, but the starting date on the western calendar varies from year to year. The holiday celebrates the events which took place over 2,300 years ago in the land of Judea, which is now Israel. The story goes like this...

Long ago in the land of Judea there was a Syrian king, Antiochus. The king ordered the Jewish people to reject their G-d, their religion, their customs and their beliefs and to worship the Greek gods. There were some who did as they were told, but many refused. One who refused was Judah Macabee.

Judah and his four brothers formed an army and chose as their name the word "Maccabee," which means hammer. After three years of fighting, the Maccabees were finally successful in driving the Syrians out of Israel and reclaimed the Temple in Jerusalem. The Maccabees wanted to clean the building and to remove the hated Greek symbols and statues. On the 25th day of the month of Kislev, the job was finished and the temple was rededicated. When Judah and his followers finished cleaning the temple, they wanted to light the eternal light, known as the N'er Tamid, which is present in every Jewish house of worship. Once lit, the oil lamp should never be extinguished. Only a tiny jug of oil was found with only enough for a single day. The oil lamp was filled and lit. Then a miracle occurred as the tiny amount of oil stayed lit not for one day, but for eight days.

Christmas – December 25th, 2019

Christian celebration of the arrival of Mary and Joseph in Bethlehem for the birth of Jesus. It is observed with worship, candle lighting, manger scenes and festive meals.

Kwanza – December 26th, 2019 to January 1st, 2020

An African American and Pan-African holiday celebrating family, community and culture, Kwanzaa is a secular observance with some religious participation.. Seven life virtues are presented. The dates are always December 26 - January 1.

Each evening a family member, usually the youngest child, lights candles in a special candleholder and discusses one of the seven principles of Kwanzaa. On the sixth day, which falls on New Year's Eve, family and friends get together to enjoy a large feast and to celebrate their history, culture, and the upcoming New Year.

The holiday of Kwanzaa was created by Dr. Maulana Karenga in 1966, during the period of US history in which African Americans were involved in struggles for their civil rights. This was the period of Martin Luther King, the Civil Rights movement, and Black Power.

Western Calendar New Year – January 1st, 2020

Three King's Day – January 6th, 2020

Three Kings Day is celebrated on January 6th, twelve days after Christmas. It is often viewed as the last day of the Christmas season (the end of the 12 days of Christmas).

Also known as The Epiphany, Three Kings Day (Día de los Reyes) is a Christian celebration that commemorates the Biblical story of the three kings who followed the star of Bethlehem to bring gifts to the Christ child. According to the Biblical story, the Three Kings – named Melchior, Caspar and Balthazar – presented the Baby Jesus with gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh. Three Kings Day was the gift-giving time, rather than Christmas day. Just as it is common for children to leave cookies for Santa in the U.S., in some regions, it was customary for children to leave their shoes out on the night of January 5, often filling them with hay for the camels, in hopes that the Three Kings would be generous. Children would awake on January 6 to find their shoes filled with toys and gifts.

Chinese Lunar New Year [Rat] – January 25th, 2020

The origin of the Chinese New Year is itself centuries old - in fact, too old to actually be traced. It is popularly recognized as the Spring Festival and celebrations last 15 days. Preparations tend to begin a month from the date of the Chinese New Year (similar to a Western Christmas), when people start buying presents, decoration materials, food and clothing. A huge clean-up gets underway days before the New Year, when Chinese houses are cleaned from top to bottom, to sweep away any traces of bad luck, and doors and windowpanes are given a new coat of paint, usually red. The doors and windows are then decorated with paper cuts and couplets with themes such as happiness, wealth and longevity printed on them.

The eve of the New Year is perhaps the most exciting part of the event, as anticipation creeps in.

Here, traditions and rituals are very carefully observed in everything from food to clothing. Dinner is usually a feast of seafood and dumplings, signifying different good wishes. Delicacies include prawns, for liveliness and happiness, dried oysters (or ho xi), for all things good, raw fish salad or yu sheng to bring good luck and prosperity, Fai-hai (Angel Hair), an edible hair-like seaweed to bring prosperity, and dumplings boiled in water (Jiaozi) signifying a long-lost good wish for a family. It's usual to wear something red as this color is meant to ward off evil spirits - but black and white are out, as these are associated with mourning. At midnight, the sky is lit up by fireworks.

On the day itself, an ancient custom called Hong Bao, meaning Red Packet, takes place. This involves married couples giving children and unmarried adults money in red envelopes. Then the family begins to say greetings from door to door, first to their relatives and then their neighbors. Like the Western saying "let bygones be bygones," at Chinese New Year, grudges are very easily cast aside. The end of the New Year is marked by the Festival of Lanterns, which is a celebration with singing, dancing and lantern shows.

Candlemas – February 2nd, 2020

This day started in ancient Rome as a day to honor the mother of the great god, Mars. Candles and torches were carried in the streets. Later, when Christianity became an important religion in Rome, Candlemas Day became a day to honor Mary and it celebrated the presentation of the Lord in the Temple. This day marks the end of the Christmas season. Because it falls in the middle of winter it was a time to begin thinking about spring.

American colonists and German settlers in Pennsylvania decided to keep the date of Candlemas Day but also added the custom of using animals that hibernate to predict the weather. Since the groundhog is the most common hibernating animal in Pennsylvania, "Punxsutawney Phil" sticks his head out of the ground each February 2nd!

Groundhog Day – February 2nd, 2020

Groundhog Day, February 2nd, is a popular tradition in the United States. It is also a legend that traverses centuries, its origins clouded in the mists of time with ethnic cultures and animals awakening on specific dates. Myths such as this tie our present to the distant past when nature did, indeed, influence our lives. It is the day that the Groundhog comes out of his hole after a long winter sleep to look for his shadow. If he sees it, he regards it as an omen of six more weeks of bad weather and returns to his hole. The groundhog tradition stems from similar beliefs associated with Candlemas Day and the days of early Christians in Europe, and for centuries the custom was to have the clergy bless candles and distribute them to the people. Even then, it marked a milestone in the winter and the weather that day was important.

Setsubun in Japan – February 3rd, 2020

The day before the beginning of spring according to the lunisolar calendar. On the evening of this day, people open the door of their houses and drive the bad spirits (i.e. bad luck) out of their homes and gardens by throwing handfuls of beans and shouting "Bad Spirits out! Good luck in!" after this ceremony, people can eat beans. The number of beans is their age. (i.e. 20-year-old people can eat 20 beans).

Valentine's Day – February 14th, 2020

Valentine's Day started in the time of the Roman Empire. In ancient Rome, February 14th was a holiday to honor Juno. Juno was the Queen of the Roman Gods and Goddesses. The Romans also knew her as the Goddess of women and marriage. The following day, February 15th, began the Feast of Lupercalia.

The lives of young boys and girls were strictly separate. However, one of the customs of the young people was name drawing. On the eve of the festival of Lupercalia the names of Roman girls were written on slips of paper and placed into jars. Each young man would draw a girl's name from the jar and would then be partners for the duration of the festival with the girl whom he chose. Sometimes the pairing of the children lasted an entire year, and often, they would fall in love and would later marry.

Under the rule of Emperor Claudius II Rome was involved in many bloody and unpopular campaigns. Claudius the Cruel was having a difficult time getting soldiers to join his military leagues. He believed that the reason was that Roman men did not want to leave their loves or families.

As a result, Claudius cancelled all marriages and engagements in Rome. The good Saint Valentine was a priest at Rome in the days of Claudius II. He and Saint Marius aided the Christian martyrs and secretly married couples, and for this kind deed Saint Valentine was apprehended and dragged before the Prefect of Rome, who condemned him to be beaten to death with clubs and to have his head cut off. He suffered martyrdom on the 14th day of February, about the year 270.

The pastors of the early Christian Church in Rome endeavored to do away with the pagan element in these feasts by substituting the names of saints for those of maidens. And as the Lupercalia began about the middle of February, the pastors appear to have chosen Saint Valentine's Day for the celebration of this new feast. So it seems that the custom of young men choosing maidens for valentines, or saints as patrons for the coming year, arose in this way.

Losar – February 24th to 26th, 2020

Happy Losar (Tibetan New Year). Tibetans all over the world celebrated Tibetan New Year on Sunday, February 6th. The word Losar is a Tibetan word for New Year. LO means year and SAR means new. The celebration of Losar can be traced back to the pre-Buddhist period in Tibet. During the period when Tibetans practiced the Bon religion, every winter a spiritual ceremony was held, in which people offered large quantities of incense to appease the local spirits, deities and protectors. This religious festival later evolved into an annual Buddhist festival which is believed to have originated during the reign of Pude Gungyal, the ninth King of Tibet. The festival is said to have begun when an old woman named Belma introduced the measurement of time based on the phases of the moon.

This festival took place during the flowering of the apricot trees of the Lhokha Yarla Shampo region in autumn, and it may have been the first celebration of what has become the traditional farmers' festival. It was during this period that the arts of cultivation, irrigation, refining iron from ore and building bridges were first introduced in Tibet. The ceremonies which were instituted to celebrate these new capabilities can be recognized as precursors of the Losar festival. Later when the rudiments of the science of astrology, based on the five elements, were introduced in Tibet, this farmer's festival became what we now call the Losar or New Year's festival.

Lent/Shrove Tuesday/Mardi Gras – February 25th, 2020

Shrove Tuesday—Mardi Gras or Fat Tuesday in French—marks the final midwinter fling before Ash Wednesday, the first day of the Lenten fast. Traditionally, believers confessed and were absolved (shrived) of their sins before the fast, then they consumed the last of luxuries such as dairy foods and meat. In England and France people now use milk and eggs to make the traditional pancakes. In Finland, the Shrove Tuesday specialty is a bun filled with almond paste and whipped cream. In many Roman Catholic countries Shrove Tuesday is the culminating day of Carnival—a word deriving from the Latin words *carne vale*, "farewell to meat." Carnival parades and balls with masked dancers and costumed figures from popular myth are the annual highlight in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, Venice, Italy, and New Orleans in the United States as well as many other Mediterranean, South American and Caribbean cities. English pancakes are also a popular dish.

Mardi Gras is Louisiana's most famous festival. The phrase "Mardi Gras" means Fat Tuesday in French. It refers to the final day of merry-making before Ash Wednesday dawns and Lent begins. This whole celebration lasts for two weeks. All through the two weeks are parades, which consist of marching bands and colorful floats. Mardi Gras began as an event to make up for lent. For two weeks about 40 days before lent was to begin many parties and elegant balls were held. They used to be by invitation only but now most parties are open to everybody. Mardi Gras colors are purple, green, and gold. Purple stands for justice, green stands for faith, and gold stands for power. Mardi Gras is known as Shrove Tuesday in Finland. People make special buns with almond paste and whipped cream. The tradition of having the Shrove Tuesday is that some people fast (abstaining from meat & meat products) 6 weeks before Easter. Shrove Tuesday was then meant to be a day when one eats as much as possible, especially fat food.

Hinamatsuri in Japan – March 3rd, 2019

March 3rd is called Hina-matsuri (Doll Festival) in Japan, and it's a celebration for young girls. (Japanese Boy's Day is May 5th.) People display a set of hina ningyo (dolls) and props in the house, wishing girls' healthy growth and happiness. Parents or grandparents of a newborn girl buy a set of gorgeous hina dolls unless they have special dolls, which are inherited from generation to generation. Hina dolls are dressed in Japanese ancient costumes and are displayed on the shelves of a stand covered with a red carpet from the end of February to March 3rd. It is believed that any hina doll display should be taken down soon after the festival day; otherwise girls might have to wait to get married.

Hina-matsuri is also called momo-no-sekku, which means a festival of peach blossoms. Peach blossoms, shiro-zake (white rice wine), and hishi-mochi (diamond shaped rice cakes) are placed on the stand with hina dolls. Hishi-mochi are colored in pink (implies peach flowers), white (implies snow), and green (implies new growth). The origin of hina-matsuri is said to be an ancient Chinese ceremony that people let paper dolls flow on a river to get rid of bad luck from their bodies. This practice was combined with girls' doll play and was established as hina-matsuri during Edo Period (1603-1867).

Traditionally, girls invited their friends to a home party and had a good time. This festival is commonly celebrated as a school or community activity nowadays, and many people prepare a special meal for girls on this day. Here is a song to sing...

English

Let's light the lanterns

Let's set peach flowers

Five court musicians are playing flutes and drums

Today is a joyful Dolls' Festival

Japanese

Akari o tsukemashou bonbori ni

Ohana o agemashou momo no hana

Go-nin bayashi no fue taiko

Kyo wa tanoshii Hinamatsuri

International Women's Day – March 8th, 2020

On March 8 China celebrates Women's day in honor of all females. All females have a day off and play or stay home and relax all day. The girls bring out special dolls to put on a stand with red clothing. These are special dolls only to be taken out once a year on Woman's Day. The men cook a feast for the women and do the chores. Some people go out to eat while others have family parties. After they eat the men give out presents to their wife and daughter. Then the special red dolls are stored away until next year for next Woman's Day.

The Ides of March – March 15th, 2020

The Ides of March are what Romans called March 15. There's no such thing as a single Ide. Every month has Ides. For example, April the 15th is the Ides of April. This is because the Romans did not count the days of the month from 1 through 30. Instead, three days in every month had names: Kalends fell on the 1st, Nones on the 5th or 7th, Ides on the 13th or 15th. When a Roman wanted to say, "March the 14th," she had to say: "the day before the Ides of March" March the 6th would be: "The day before the None of March." I imagine kids learned math quite naturally this way!

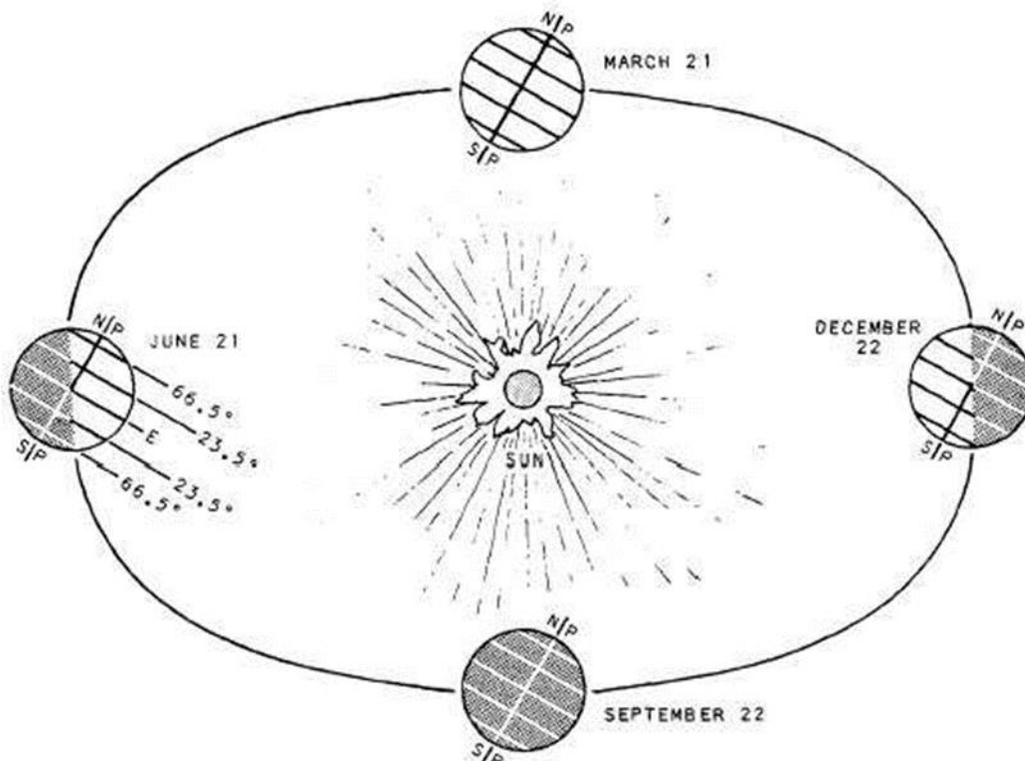
Saint Patrick's Day – March 17th, 2020

The person who was to become St. Patrick, the patron saint of Ireland, was born in Wales about AD 385. His given name was Maewyn, and he almost didn't get the job of bishop of Ireland because he lacked the required scholarship. Far from being a saint, until he was 16, he considered himself a pagan. At that age, he was sold into slavery by a group of Irish marauders that raided his village. During his captivity, he became closer to God. He escaped from slavery after six years and went to Gaul where he studied in the monastery under St. Germain, bishop of Auxerre for a period of twelve years. During his training he became aware that his calling was to convert the pagans to Christianity.

His wishes were to return to Ireland, to convert the native pagans to Christianity. But his superiors instead appointed St. Palladius. But two years later, Palladius transferred to Scotland. Patrick, having adopted that Christian name earlier, was then appointed as second bishop to Ireland. Patrick was quite successful at winning converts. And this fact upset the Celtic Druids. Patrick was arrested several times, but escaped each time. He traveled throughout Ireland, establishing monasteries across the country. He also set up schools and churches which would aid him in his conversion of the Irish country to Christianity. His mission in Ireland lasted for thirty years. After that time, Patrick retired to County Down. He died on March 17 in AD 461. That day has been commemorated as St. Patrick's Day ever since. One traditional icon of the day is the shamrock. And this stems from a more bona fide Irish tale that tells how Patrick used the three-leafed shamrock to explain the Trinity. He used it in his sermons to represent how the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit could all exist as separate elements of the same entity. His followers adopted the custom of wearing a shamrock on his feast day. The St. Patrick's Day custom came to America in 1737. That was the first year St. Patrick's Day was publicly celebrated in this country, in Boston.

Autumn Equinox – March 19th, 2019

Scientifically known as the AUTUMNAL EQUI-NOX, when Earth's axis is again perpendicular to the Sun's rays. This date marks the beginning of fall in the Northern Hemisphere and spring in the Southern Hemisphere. It is also the date, along with March 21, when the Sun reaches its highest position (zenith) directly over the equator.



Marks the completion of the harvest. Day and Night are equal. This is a time for thanksgiving and meditation. Traditional foods for this day are corn bread cakes, wheat products, breads, nuts, vegetables, apples, cider, carrots, onions, potatoes and pomegranates. Traditional scents for this day are benzoin, myrrh and sage. Traditional gemstones for this day are carnelian, lapis lazuli, sapphire, and yellow agate.

NoRuz – March 19th, 2020

No Ruz, (new day) or New Year as the Iranians call it, is a celebration of spring Equinox. It has been celebrated by all the major cultures of ancient Mesopotamia. Sumerians, 3000BC, Babylonians 2000 BC, the ancient kingdom of Elam in Southern Persia 2000BC, Akaddians all have been celebrating it in one form or another. What we have today as No Ruz with its' uniquely Iranian characteristics has been celebrated for at least 3000 years and is deeply rooted in the traditions of Zoroastrian belief system.

This was the religion of Ancient Persia before the advent of Islam 1400 years ago. It is known as the mother religion in the area. The familiar concepts of Hell, Heaven, Resurrection, coming of the Messiah, individual and last judgment were for the first time incorporated into this belief system. They still exist in Judo-Christian and Islamic traditions. In order to understand No Ruz we have to know about Zoroastrians' cosmology.

These people believed in two primal forces. In their ancient text, Bundahishn foundation of creation, we read that The Lord of Wisdom residing in the eternal light was not God. He created all that was good and became God. The Hostile Spirit, Angra Mainyu (Ahriman), residing in the eternal darkness created all that was bad and became the Hostile Spirit (The word anger in English comes from the same origin).

Everything that produced life, protected and enriched it was regarded as good. This included all forces of nature beneficial to humans. Earth, waters, sky, animals, plants were all good. Justice, honesty, peace, health, beauty, joy and happiness were regarded as belonging to the good forces. All that threatened life and created disorder belonged to the hostile spirits.

The two worlds created did not have a material form but the essence of everything was present. The two existed side by side for three thousand years, but completely separate from each other. At the end of the third millennium the Hostile Spirit saw light, wanted it and attacked the good world. This was the beginning of all troubles we face now.

The Lord of Wisdom in order to protect his world created the material world "Gaeity," What we have today as No Ruz goes back to the Sassanid period. They were the last great Persian Empire before the advent of Islam 1400 years ago. Their celebrations would start five days prior to the New Year. They believed the guardian angels (Fourhars) would come down to earth within these five days to visit their human counter parts. A major spring-cleaning was carried out to welcome them with feasts and celebrations. Bon fires would be set on rooftops at night to indicate to the guardian angles that humans were ready to receive them. This was called Suri Festival.

Modern Iranians still carry out the spring-cleaning and celebrate Wednesday Suri. Bon fires are made and all people will jump over the fire on the last Tuesday of the year. This is a purification rite and Iranians believe by going over the fire they will get rid of all their illnesses and misfortunes. Wednesday Suri did not exist before Islam and very likely is a combination of more than one ritual to make it last.

The ancient Zoroastrians would also celebrate the first five days of No Ruz, but it was the sixth day that was the most important of all. This day was called the Great No Ruz (No Ruze bozorg) and is assumed to be the birthday of Zoroaster himself. Zoroastrians today still celebrate this day, but it has lost its significance for the rest of the Iranians. In Sassanid period the New Year would be celebrated for 21 days and on the 19th day there would be another major festival.

Modern Iranians celebrate New Year for 13 days only. The first few days are spent visiting older members of the family other relatives and friends. Gifts are exchanged; sweets and feasts will be consumed. At the last day, the 13th of the first month, all people will leave their homes to go to the parks or rural areas to spend a day in nature. Again this was not celebrated in this manner before and might be several rituals in one. A major part of the New Year rituals is setting a special table with seven specific items present, Haft Sin (Haft chin, seven crops before Islam). In the ancient times each of the items corresponded to one of the seven creations and the seven holy immortals protecting them.

Today they are changed and modified but some have kept their symbolism. All the seven items start with the letter S; this was not the order in ancient times. Wheat or barley representing new growth is still present. Fish the most easily obtainable animal and water are present. Lit candles are a symbol of fire. Mirrors are used today, origin unknown. These were expensive items in ancient times and were made from polished metal. It is unlikely that all households would have one. Zoroastrians today place the lit candle in front of the mirror. Wine was always present. Today it is replaced by vinegar since alcohol is banned in Islam.

Egg a universal symbol of fertility corresponding to the mother earth is still present. Garlic is used to warn off bad omen. This is a modern introduction. There is no evidence that it was used in that context before. However the ancient Iranians would grow seven different herbs for the New Year and garlic might have been one of those. Samano a thick brownish paste is present today. It is a nutritious meal and could have been part of the feasts. It is also possible that it has replaced Haoma.

Haoma is a sacred herbal mix known for its healing properties. It was a major cult on its own with many rituals and ceremonies. The cult is still performed by the Zoroastrians today, but is abandoned by the rest of the Iranians. Coins symbolizing wealth and prosperity, fruits and special meals are present as well.

Why this festival has survived? There have been major attempts by the Muslim rulers over the centuries to minimize it, ban it or get rid of it once and for all. The reasons for their failure should be sought in the spirit of this festival. No Ruz is a celebration of life.

Easter – April 12th, 2020

Easter is observed by the churches of the West on the first Sunday following the full moon that occurs on or following the spring equinox (March 21st). So Easter became a "movable" feast which can occur as early as March 22 or as late as April 25. In Christian countries Easter is celebrated as the religious holiday commemorating the resurrection of Jesus Christ, the son of God. But celebrations of Easter also have many customs and legends that are pagan in origin and have nothing to do with Christianity.

Scholars, accepting the derivation proposed by the 8th-century English scholar St. Bede, believe the name Easter is thought to come from the Scandinavian "Ostra" and the Teutonic "Ostern" or "Eastre," both Goddesses of mythology signifying spring and fertility whose festival was celebrated on the day of the Vernal Equinox. Traditions associated with the festival survive in the Easter rabbit, a symbol of fertility, and in colored Easter-eggs painted with bright colors to represent the sunlight of spring, and used in Easter-egg rolling contests or given as gifts.

The Christian celebration of Easter embodies a number of converging traditions with emphasis on the relation of Easter to the Jewish festival of Passover, or Pesach, from which is derived Pasch, another name used by Europeans for Easter. Passover is an important feast in the Jewish calendar which is celebrated for 8 days and commemorates the flight and freedom of the Israelites from slavery in Egypt. The early Christians, many of whom were of Jewish origin, were brought up in the Hebrew tradition and regarded Easter as a new feature of the Passover festival, a commemoration of the advent of the Messiah as foretold by the prophets.

Earth Day – April 22nd, 2020

Gaia, Ancient earth day is May 11th. On April 22, 1970, the first Modern Earth Day was held. Earth Day uses one of humanity's great discoveries, the discovery of anniversaries by which, throughout time, human beings have kept their sorrows and their joys, their victories, their revelations and their obligations alive, for re-celebration and re-dedication another year, another decade, another century another eon. Earth Day reminds the people of the world of the need for continuing care which is vital to Earth's safety. Earth Day draws on astronomical phenomena in a new way; using the vernal equinox, the time when the Sun crosses the equator making night and day of equal length in all parts of the Earth. To this point in the annual calendar, Earth Day attaches no local or divisive set of symbols, no statement of the truth or superiority of one way of life over another. But the selection of the March equinox makes planetary observance of a shared event possible.

The vernal equinox calls on all mankind to recognize and respect Earth's beautiful systems of balance, between the presence of animals on land, the fish in the sea, birds in the air, mankind, water, air, and land. Most importantly there must always be awareness of the actions by people that can disturb this precious balance.

Ramadan – April 23rd, 2020 to May 23rd, 2020

The present tradition of Ramadan lanterns dates from the rule of Saladin. Lantern designs were copied from the Qanadil and Mishkat (lamps) of Mosques. However, according to the historian, Al-Maqrizi, in his book, "Kitab al-Mawa'iz wa al-'I'tibar Bidhikr al-Khitat wa al-'Athar" (page 265), alludes to an earlier tradition. According to him, it was originally a Coptic Christian festivity celebrated at Christmas time (Coptic version) where people used to parade with colorful candles. The competition was to "outdo" each other with more and more expensive candles until one day when hard times fell upon Egypt, the people were no longer able to afford to buy the very expensive candles and thus the tradition nearly died out.

However, as many of the Coptic population converted to Islam, the memory of the candle festivities never quite died out, and out of cheap tin, tinkers made lanterns equally beautiful to the original candles and hence the tradition was reborn. This time for Ramadan. Actually, the roots of this celebration of lights can be traced all the way back to the Ancient Egyptians who celebrated the Heliacal (visible after sunset) rising of the star "Sirius" (Shu`ayr).

The occasion was marked by a festival of lights in which the Ancient Egyptians walked through the streets carrying torches. The festivities lasted for five epagomenal days (special days dedicated to the Ancient Egyptian Deities). Each day celebrated, in turn, the birthdays of Osiris, his son Horus, his sister and wife Isis, his arch enemy and brother Seth, and Seth's wife Nephtys. This tradition of lights, which began with the torches of the Ancient Egyptians, continued with the candles of the Copts and finally ended up with the lanterns of Ramadan.

May Eve – April 30th, 2020

Almost everywhere in Sweden the 30th of April is one of the festive highlights of the Swedish year. People gather around huge bonfires to welcome the spring on "sista april" the Eve of May Day, Walpurgis Night. It is unknown when this tradition is grounded and though it was mentioned as early as 1711 it's believed that this ancient custom is much older than that. It's known that the peasants made a lot of noise and lit bonfires to keep the wild animals away from the cattle and sheep when they were let out to graze for the first time of year on the 1st May.

Nowadays fireworks make the noise. This evening marks the end of winter and the coming of spring. The bonfires are lit around 9pm and there is a lot of singing attached to this custom.

Along with the people gathered around the bonfires choirs sing old songs about the spring. Although Walpurgis is well celebrated it's not a real holiday in Sweden like Labor Day on the 1st May. The spring bonfires are seen almost everywhere except in the western parts of Sweden, where Easter bonfires are preferred.

May Day – May 1st, 2019

Mayfair

The official celebration of spring's arrival! Usually celebrated as a community event with dancing, singing, a Maypole and games.

Mother's Day – May 10th, 2019

The earliest Mother's Day celebrations can be traced back to the spring celebrations of ancient Greece in honor of Rhea, the Mother of the Gods. During the 1600's, England celebrated a day called "Mothering Sunday." Celebrated on the 4th Sunday of Lent (the 40 day period leading up to Easter*), "Mothering Sunday" honored the mothers of England.

During this time many of the England's poor worked as servants for the wealthy. As most jobs were located far from their homes, the servants would live at the houses of their employers. On Mothering Sunday the servants would have the day off and were encouraged to return home and spend the day with their mothers. A special cake, called the mothering cake, was often brought along to provide a festive touch. In the United States, Mother's Day was first suggested in 1872 by Julia Ward Howe (who wrote the words to the Battle hymn of the Republic) as a day dedicated to peace. Ms. Howe would hold organized Mother's Day meetings in Boston, Mass ever year.

In 1907 Ana Jarvis, from Philadelphia, began a campaign to establish a national Mother's Day. Ms. Jarvis and her supporters began to write to ministers, businessmen, and politicians in their quest to establish a national Mother's Day. It was successful as by 1911 Mother's Day was celebrated in almost every state. President Woodrow Wilson, in 1914, made the official announcement proclaiming Mother's Day as a national holiday that was to be held each year on the 2nd Sunday of May.

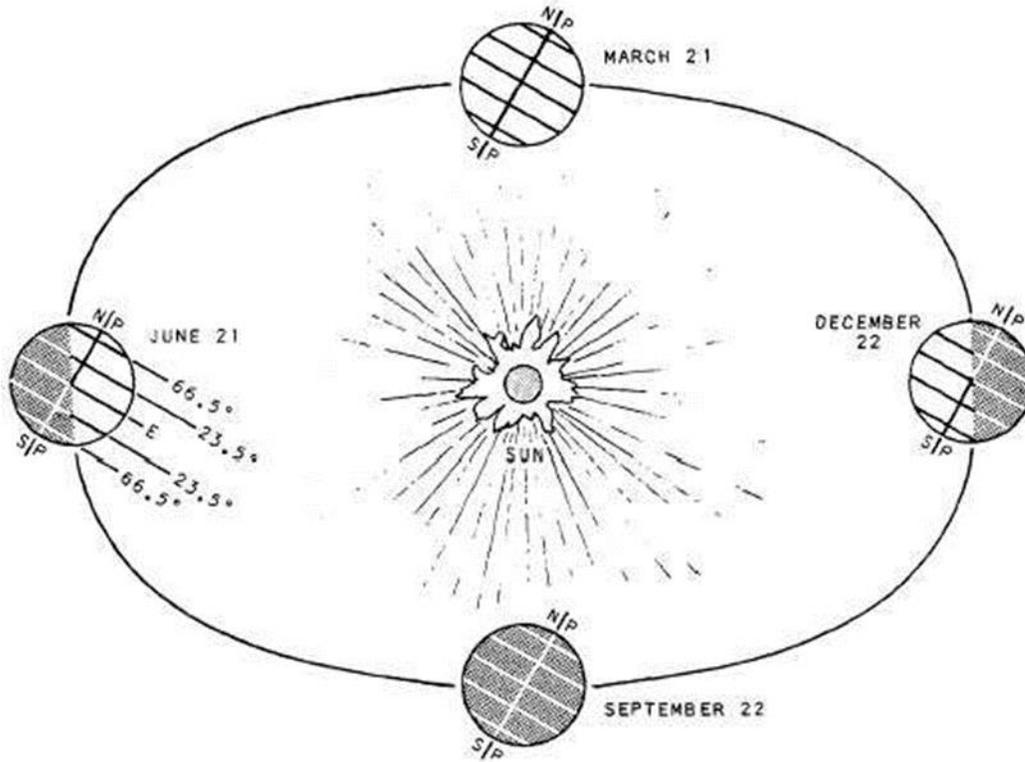
While many countries of the world celebrate their own Mother's Day at different times throughout the year, there are some countries such as Denmark, Finland, Italy, Turkey, Australia, and Belgium which also celebrate Mother's Day on the second Sunday of May.

Cinco de Mayo – May 5th, 2020

Cinco de Mayo is a national holiday in Mexico. The Mexican armies won a big battle on May 5, 1862, against the French army. The French had been occupying Mexico at that time. The Mexican army was outnumbered and under armed. Many schools in Los Angeles and Orange County celebrate Cinco de Mayo at school.

Winter Solstice – June 20th, 2020

Scientifically known as the WINTER SOLSTICE, when the Sun has reached its southernmost zenith position at the Tropic of Capricorn. It marks the beginning of winter in the Northern Hemisphere and the beginning of summer in the Southern Hemisphere.



209.3

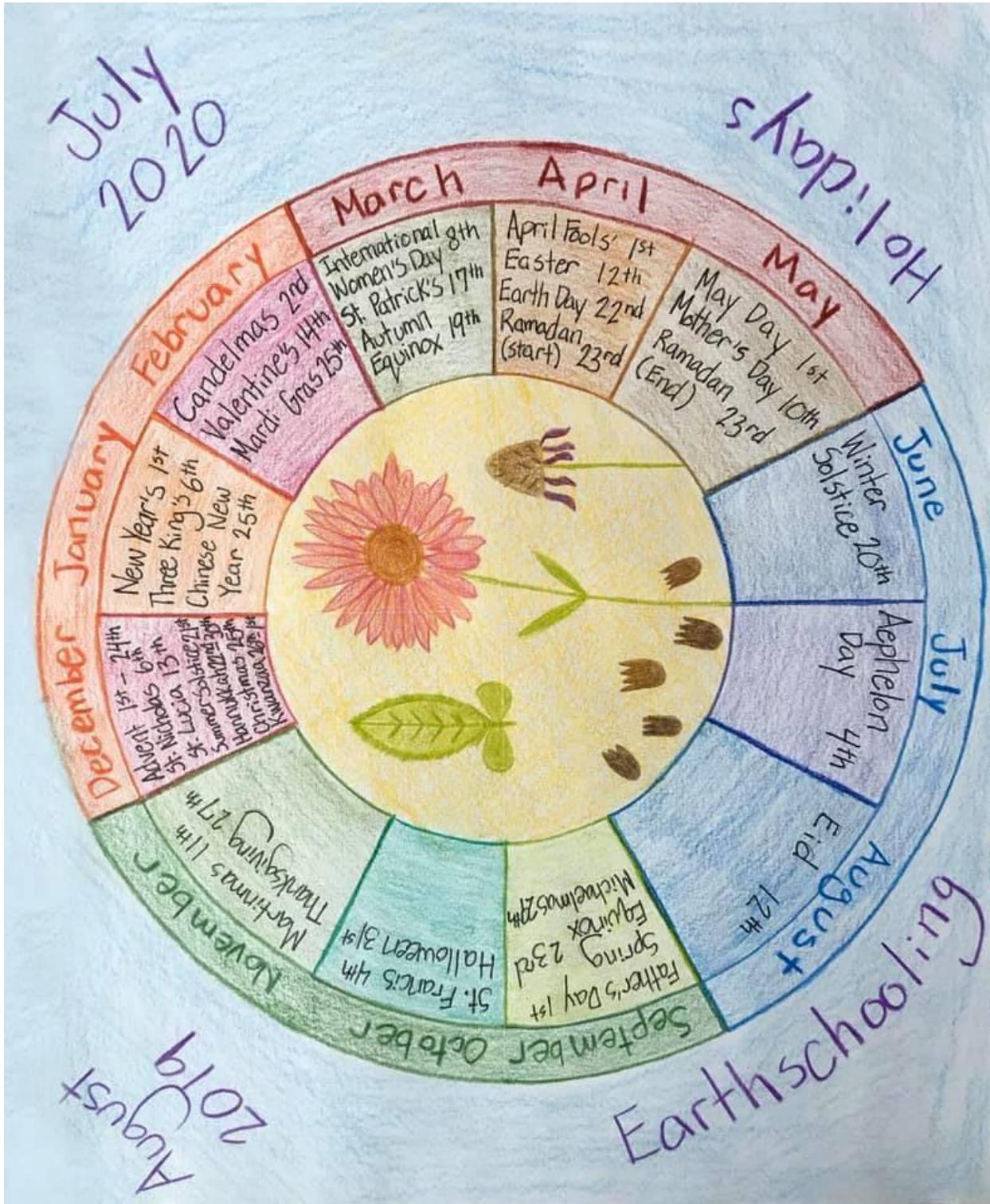
The shortest day of the year and the longest night. Traditional foods on this day are: roasted turkey, nuts, and eggnog. Traditional scents are bayberry, cedar, pine and rosemary. The traditional gemstones for this day are cat's eye and ruby.

Aphelion – July 4th, 2020

This is the day the Earth is furthest from the sun. Today, the sun is 94.8 million miles from earth compared to 91.7 million miles in January. The earth is 4 degrees warmer today on average compared to January. This is because 40% of the northern hemisphere being covered by land masses compared to only 20% of the southern hemisphere being covered by land. So even though we are the farthest away from the sun today compared to any other day of the year, it is where our land masses are located and the and the tilt of the earth that play huge roles in our climate and seasons. Want more...the earth's orbital speed is 18.2 miles per second today or a bit slower compared to a speed of 18.8 miles per second in January.

Eid Al-Fitr – July 30th, 2020 to July 31st, 2020

Islamic event marking the close of Ramadan. It is a festival of thanksgiving to Allah for enjoying the month of Ramadan. It involves wearing finest clothing, saying prayers, and fostering understanding with other religions.



Lesson Plan Chart

Why Use a Chart

This is the same chart I used for my school. Because the ages of the children varied from semester to semester and during some periods I even used this chart for my own children (all two years apart) I always filled in this chart differently using the monthly guides I had made. The other benefit of using the chart was that if I found new material that month or another mother shared material with me for that month I could just add it to the chart with the outline I had already made. This chart is also flexible. It gave me the flexibility to “exchange” crafts if I didn’t have all the supplies one week or something...all I had to do was switch what I had written in the week for “crafts” with another week.

How to Use the Chart

1. I have provided you with four MAIN rows. These represent the weeks of the month.
2. I have provided you with three smaller sections within each row. These represent divisions in that week. You can divide the week in any way you wish. Some examples are: You have classes three days a week and you try to finish everything in one day. OR: You have classes five days a week and you stretch out the lessons to a more comfortable pace (some crafts need this extra time and you always want to give the children time to hear the stories again and to explore the crafts rather than just “finishing” them!) OR: You just fill in one of the sections for your once a week class. OR: You can fill in one section for one child and another section for another child’s age and so on. You can also modify this chart for your own needs.
3. There are four columns in this chart. One is so you can fill in the verses for that week. Since you already have verse sheets I have provided you printed out (and I also worked from these sheets) I usually use this column to add in any “new” songs I have discovered or any music related activities I may do with the children such as recorder or harp practice. The second column is to list the stories you will be telling and when. The third column is to list the crafts and the fourth column is for you to list the snacks you will be providing. If this is for a class you are teaching this is a way for you to monitor what you are serving and not repeat things. If this is a homeschool program you may want your children to fill in the blanks here and have them help you make the snack! I would also put my “bread of the week” in that column so I would remember to bake the Mardi Gras bread on Mardi Gras, etc. However, other than holidays I would always make the basic bread recipe as the children really enjoy that!

Month: _____				
Language	Songs & Music	Stories	Crafts	Math & Science

Waldorf Holidays:

Birthdays & Extra Holidays:

Themes:

Other Planners

One of our wonderful members Kimkyo Chavez created the following planners for Earthschoolers to use. You can choose to use any or all of these planners as well. I am also including a photo of a colorful planner she did one month to show you that you can also be creative when you do your planners.



Earthschooling Homeschool Planner

by Kimyko Chavez

The Festival Year

with approximate dates

Epiphany – ~January 6

The Baptism of Christ – ~January 12

Imbolc (Candlemas Eve)/St. Briget's Day – February 1

Ash Wednesday/Lent – 40 days before Easter

Vernal Equinox - ~March 20

Easter/Passover -First Sunday after the first full moon after equinox

Beltane/May Day – May 1

Pentecost/Whitsun – Seventh Sunday after Easter

Summer Solstice – June 21

St. John's Tide – June 24

Lammas – August 1

Autumnal Equinox - ~September 21

Michaelmas – September 29

Hallowe'en/Samhain – October 31

All Saints and All Souls Day – November 1 and 2

Martinmas – November 11

Thanksgiving – Fourth Sunday of November

Advent – Begins four Sundays before Christmas

Chanukah – Begins (usually) near the beginning of December

St. Nicholas Day – December 6

Winter Solstice/Yule – December 21

Christmas – December 25

Kwanzaa – Begins December 26

Notes

Long Range Goals

Supplies

Topics to Be Covered This Year

Inner Work

The Year's Lesson Blocks at a Glance

Notes

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday
Breakfast			
Circle Time			
Main Lesson			
Lesson A			

Lunch			
Lesson B			
Lesson C			
Evening Reading			

	Thursday	Friday	Notes for the Week
Breakfast			
Circle Time			
Main Lesson			
Lesson A			

Lunch			
Lesson B			
Lesson C			
Evening Reading			

	Thursday	Friday	Weekend Activities
Breakfast			
Circle Time			
Main Lesson			
Lesson A			

Lunch			
Lesson B			
Lesson C			
Evening Reading			

	Thursday	Friday	
Breakfast			
Circle Time			
Main Lesson			
Lesson A			

Lunch			
Lesson B			
Lesson C			
Evening Reading			

	Thursday	Friday	
Breakfast			
Circle Time			
Main Lesson			
Lesson A			

Lunch			
Lesson B			
Lesson C			
Evening Reading			