

World Early Childhood Conference – April 2026

Heather Church, WECAN Co-Director

As fate would have it, on the very day I was meant to travel across the ocean to Switzerland for the World Early Childhood Conference, my body had other plans and kept me at home. Not wanting to miss this remarkable gathering, I followed along with over 1000 Waldorf early childhood teachers from around the world via live stream.

For each of the morning events, I found myself waking in the night six hours behind, making my way slowly to the living room, and settling in to listen to every moment of the keynote lectures. I sang with you, followed the verses, and received the talks as though I were sitting quietly in the chair beside you all. It was a strange and beautiful experience—truly like being a fly on the wall, present and yet apart.

Of course, I missed the walk up and down the hill with the trees in bloom, the steps inside the Goetheanum, and, most of all, the living encounters with so many colleagues from around the world.

Afterward, I found myself wondering if I might not have been the only one experiencing a sense of absence or distance from this extraordinary gathering. Perhaps others, too, held a longing to be there in person. With that in mind, I invited a few colleagues who did attend to share one or two highlights that were especially meaningful to them, and you will find their reflections below.

We have also created a small lookbook of photographs kindly shared with us by IASWECE. These images offer a glimpse into the atmosphere and life of this remarkable event.

If you would like to watch the keynotes I was able to join via livestream, [you can purchase them here](#).

Enjoy.



Imagine the Great Hall of the Goetheanum filled each morning with the singing of more than 1000 early childhood educators, keynote speakers sharing inspiration from their inner and outer work, a puppetry festival with plays from around the world, the beauty of springtime in full blossom on the Swiss hillside, laughter and sparkling conversation filling indoor and outdoor spaces, and four days dedicated to the

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cultivation of kindness, strength and love and to the celebration of 100 years of Waldorf early childhood education, which has spread from humble beginnings to more than 2000 settings on five continents around the world.



At the end of the celebration, participants were each given seeds from the Goetheanum garden to take home and plant in the soil. And inner seeds were planted in our souls during this extraordinary time together in Dornach: seeds of gratitude, steadfastness, and a sense that each of us is deeply connected to the whole of humanity and the whole of life. And now our challenge is how to nurture these seeds - in our souls, in our soil so that we can create gardens for childhood and an education for peace in the world.





Sophia's Hearth faculty, alumni, and students gathered at the World Conference of Waldorf Early Childhood Teachers in Dornach, Switzerland. It was a deeply rewarding and heartening experience to connect with educators from around the globe, each bringing their own unique cultural perspective, wisdom, and care to their work with young children.

We were especially inspired by the presenters who spoke to the importance of nurturing children's capacities so they may meet the future with confidence and strength. Though we cannot know what paths lie ahead for the children in our care, we are reminded that Waldorf Education helps build these capacities through our daily work, which remains at the very heart of each day we share with them. Katherine Scharff on behalf of the teachers and students who gathered at the conference.



There were many wonderful human encounters of the present, cheers to Louise, Meggan, Sandra, Susan, Gabriela, Natalia, and so many others who, day after day, shared the Pioneer book, created to honour our past and carry heartfelt hopes for the future, seen so clearly in the eyes of former students now teaching in the kindergarten in Colmar. In the mornings, we found ourselves singing with one voice, even as we moved in four parts, held together in our shared care for the little child. Where else in this vast world might one witness over a thousand well-balanced adults gathered in silent expectation and quiet joy, waiting to see a handmade doll find its new beholder? And finally, I share a deep sense of gratitude to the lecturers, whose work inspired us to continue striving more earnestly with ourselves, in recognition of the blessings within our human imperfection.

In Peace, Kate Hall-Gauthier, WECAN Regional Representative and Early Childhood Teacher.



We were delighted to experience a puppet and fairy-tale festival, rich in table puppetry and marionette theatre from many different cultures. Each of us could choose from four tales, and while some were told in their native languages—such as Estonian and Taiwanese—I found myself especially carried by the visual storytelling, the gestures, and the beauty of the settings. The Taiwanese tale, in particular, invited us into a quiet, dreaming space beyond words. A Finnish puppeteer brought to life a woman devoted to her garden, who gently tamed a deer so it would not eat all her flowers, allowing bees, butterflies, and many small creatures to gather. The felted figures and scenery were truly beautiful and offered much inspiration for spring storytelling.

And yet, it was a much simpler presentation—closer to what we share in a kindergarten, a story that I will keep for future use. For some time, I had been searching for a story to bring in the autumn, during the wheat harvest, for older children, as a companion to replace the Little Red Hen, which I tell to the younger ones. This story, a traditional Croatian folktale, spoke to my heart in just the right way. After the conference, I found a French version, adapted it slightly, and then translated it into English. I am happy to share both versions with you.

Chalia Tuzlak, Early Childhood Teacher and Early Childhood Program Manager at Pégase-Isael Institute in Chambly, Quebec.