

Birth to Three

Anjum Mir and Heather Church, Working Group on Birth to Three



We write to you in the tailwinds of the CARE 1 Conference—**Becoming and Belonging**—which took place in Spring Valley at the beginning of August. It was a remarkable gathering, bringing together medical and therapeutic practitioners with Birth-to-Three educators, united in their care for the youngest children in our movement.

The work was both good and hard. We came with open hearts and minds, seeking to deepen our understanding of the child from conception to age three. Together, we asked: *How can we support this delicate process of incarnation? What hindrances do we encounter? How can we nurture both the child and the emerging relationship between pedagogical and therapeutic fields?*

Each participant brought their own gifts and expertise, and yet a new, vital question began to stir: *What can we offer one another?* One field is richly developed yet struggles to find its place in the wider world, while the other is among the least paid and least recognized professions. Now, these seeds have been

planted. New relationships are forming, and with courage and steadfastness, we can continue this collaborative journey.

This fall, Dr. Adam Blanning and Debbie Laurin will collaborate in our Families and Caregivers series with a presentation focusing on the sense of touch for the child from birth onward. By creating offerings to include families and caregivers, we hope that these collaborations will continue to foster building bridges in support of young children. Dr. Blanning will speak from a medical perspective on the sense of touch, while Debbie Laurin will bring a pedagogical perspective on touch while caring for young children.

On January 14, Nancy Blanning will lead an evening for families devoted to understanding grade one readiness in Waldorf schools, giving families insight into this vital transition from kindergarten to grade school. To close the series, on February 25, Dr. Adam Blanning will return with a presentation on the spiritual development of the adults who accompany young children, continuing the work he began last year on the spiritual development of the child.

As we look ahead, we remain committed to strengthening Family and Child programs within our member institutions and beyond. Just as our work with children in the first seven years lays the foundation for future learning, so too does our work with young families lay a foundation of understanding for Waldorf education and its value for the children—and for the world.

Most importantly, in this message, we would like to express our deep gratitude to Magdalena Toran, whom we honor as a founding member of the WECAN Birth-to-Three Working Group. For more than ten years, her wisdom, inspiration, and dedication to the young child and their families have guided and inspired us. We will miss you, Magdalena. At the same time, we are grateful to warmly welcome Katherine Scharff and Debbie Laurin into the group. In this moment, we hold both loss and new beginnings—gratitude for what has been, and excitement for what is to come.

With deep gratitude for the privilege of doing this work on behalf of WECAN,
Anjum and Heather