

## **Summer Intensive 2021**

### **Moving Forward with Virtual Learning: Finding Silver Linings Amidst the Challenges**

When it came time to meet and discuss our 2021 Summer Intensive teacher training program, we had an important decision to make. Would we offer a hybrid experience where student can choose virtual or in-person or would we once more offer a fully virtual experience?

When making this decision, we put the experience of the students at the center of our conversation. We knew that some would have been able to participate in-person, but restrictions as to how many people can be in one room at this time made for logistical difficulties. Knowing that we would have many people necessarily participating virtually, we couldn't imagine the in-person schedule working well for virtual students, as it would require many hours a day on Zoom. Conversely, a schedule that worked for our virtual students would mean hours of downtime for our in-person students.

We have also encouraged our students to think about how they can enhance their own experience with the virtual format. Were there other students in their area with whom they could participate from the same location? Could they designate an area of their home for virtual meetings and bring beauty to it, perhaps with fresh flowers or gifts from the natural world? Is there a meditation they could enter into before they logged on? It is vital for our students to consider their own educational needs and make themselves a part of the learning process.

This past year has challenged us all in many ways. We have worked to find new ways to think about our shared destiny. Why have we all "chosen" to be a part of training at this time? If we have chosen this time, we have also chosen this virtual experience--what might this mean for our lives, our community, and for Waldorf education? How can the challenges of meeting virtually work to strengthen and broaden us all?

Already we have seen how our virtual courses have allowed individuals to join and enrich our experience who otherwise would not have been able to attend. When family, work, or other commitments make finding time for schooling difficult, virtual learning can be a solution. We trust that moving forward we will continue to grow and find gifts amidst these transformative times.