

Early-Childhood Martinmas Festival Invitation

November 11 is Martinmas, a festival celebrated in honor of St. Martin, a Roman soldier in the 4th century who cut his cloak in two to share with a poor, cold beggar. That night, in his dream, the Christ figure appeared to Martin, wearing the cloak Martin had given the beggar. From then on Martin dedicated his life to serving humankind. He brought warmth and light into human darkness by his various deeds of kindness. In fact, the term Good Samaritan comes from this legend. November 11 is also the first day of winter in the old pagan calendar.

This festival is celebrated at a time when the darkness of the year is growing stronger. In Waldorf schools in the Northern Hemisphere we have a "lantern walk"; using our handmade vessels, we gather the last rays of summer's sun to light our way toward the darkness of winter, thus giving us strength and courage. In the early childhood classroom, we tell a story about the spark of sun lighting our winter darkness, and sing joyful songs about our lanterns. Though the festival is inspired by Martin's story, the festival and associated stories are nondenominational. This festival forms a pathway through the cycle of the year when light will return again, as will be expressed in our garden of light celebration in December.

We hope that you and your child will join us for this special festival. Bring the lantern we made at school and go to the backyard, where a fire will be lit. A teacher will light the candle in the lantern. We will sing the songs we have been singing at school. A story will be told. We will sing the songs one more time, and then proceed to the lantern walk, walking in silence. One teacher will be leading the way, while another will be at the back of the group. Please stay with your child for the entire event. At the end of the walk, we will quietly leave campus before the usual hustle and bustle of children's play begins. The whole event will take place in less than an hour, and you will be able to go home in time for dinner, maybe lit by the glow of the lantern.

Please park your car with the lights facing away from the early-childhood building so that headlights will not blind those at EC.