

Food for thought from the RSST

Carrying the Light of Whitsun

By Jade Kelly, RSST member

Some of the moments children carry most deeply from their school years are often the simplest: candlelight, song, seasonal rituals returning year after year, a feeling of warmth and belonging woven quietly into school life.

As autumn draws to a close and we near winter, Steiner schools enter a season of festivals centred around light and the inner life we nurture in children. One of these is Whitsun, celebrated fifty days after Easter.

In the Christian tradition, it recalls the disciples gathered and receiving the Holy Spirit, finding understanding beyond language. In Steiner education, Whitsun is often experienced through themes of light, reflection, and our relationship to one another.

Like many Steiner festivals, Whitsun is not only understood through explanation, but through lived experience. Its meaning is carried through atmosphere, symbolism, seasonal rhythm, and the quiet moments that stay with us long after the festival has passed.

For many children, it is through these seasonal festivals that the year begins to take on a deeper rhythm and meaning. The returning gestures, songs, and rituals help create a sense of continuity, memory, and belonging within the life of the school.

Over the years, Michael Park School has marked Whitsun in different ways, with each generation of teachers and students bringing something of themselves to the festival. In many ways, this reflects the nature of Steiner education itself, where traditions are carried forward not as fixed performances, but as living experiences, renewed through each new generation while holding true to their deeper meaning.

When the rhythms of the festivals are gently echoed at home, they can take on an even deeper sense of meaning for children. If you would like to bring a little of Whitsun's feeling into home life, one simple tradition is to light one large candle alongside twelve smaller candles, inspired by the twelve disciples. Each smaller candle can be lit from the central flame, representing or remembering someone connected to your lives: family, friends, ancestors, or loved ones near and far.

These simple rituals can become meaningful. When what's experienced at school is carried into the home, it can help nurture a sense of continuity and connection, not only to the festival, but to family and the shared life of the school. Perhaps it is these small moments of warmth, beauty, and togetherness that children carry long after the festival has passed.



Please feel free to contact the RSST to share your thoughts or comments. rsst@michaelpark.school.nz

