

Our Christmas spiral is a very simple tradition created by our school at a time when we had nothing. We had to create everything for our selves, even find a building to work in and to find like-minded people who are willing to work hard and commit (there are plenty of like-minded people who like our ideas but not that many willing to work hard, pay money, travel and commit!) So once we had the basics of a building and a small community trickled together, we created this simple symbol of thanks and gratitude - a Christmas Spiral. We have all sacrificed so much to be at this school (especially in terms of money and time,) but we have gained so much (community, time with our children, understanding our children more, a focus on responsibility and enjoyment...)

Our Spiral:

- Is made out of fresh rosemary, as rosemary is symbolic of remembrance. We want to remember our childhoods and the significance of family. We want to remember that we have much to be thankful for, in terms of health, being gifted our own children to raise, for the opportunities this wonderful country Australia allows us, for freedom and democracy, for our wealthy lifestyles (in comparison to others in the world), for our emotional health and strength, for choices..... We want to remember the joy in our own lives before we grew up. We want to remember a Christmas behind the commercial image and of popular culture. We want everyone to be able to remember what is important to them.
- Is shaped as a spiral to symbolise spiralling deeper and inwards, which is what our children's brains and hearts need to stay healthy- deep connections that make sense to them and connections and relationships that keep growing deeper. The spiral symbolises learning as a life long process and we hope that symbolises our school.
- **Is lit by tea-light candles contributed by each family** to symbolise the light each family brings to this community, our school. Our school only exists because of what each family brings to this school. Without families supporting each other and lighting the way for themselves and each other, the journey is dark and much of what surrounds us goes unseen, unheard and unappreciated!
- **Has small simple contributions that each family is asked to place** around the spiral to symbolise the interdependence we all have with each other and the physical world- rocks, sand, a jar of water... with the plant world- flowers, leaves, fruit, food, clothes, medicine.... the animal world-pets, food, insects for pollination, wild animals... (bring an egg, a nest, a toy animal, a photograph of a pet) and the people world- all our inventions and creations and human relationships (bring photos, small objects like a battery to symbolise electricity- try living with out it to realise its importance, or bring a calculator to symbolise numbers which help organise our thinking). Much of the children's curriculum in science, society and

environment, history, literature, technology and the arts is about the people world (the work we do, religions, families, birth and death, history, war, inventions, explorers), the physical world (minerals like oil, gold, stone, the weather, natural disasters), the plant and animal world and how they effect us humans. Placing these objects around our spiral is a symbol for the children how we all rely upon what is around us and the need for us to care and protect it. We are all connected through the spiral and all have value.

- **Is simple...**, because life is so complicated and often the Christmas period can weigh us adults down with all the expectations we place upon ourselves or others place upon us. In this day and age where polished performances and concerts for Christmas are expected, we have gone in the opposite direction to symbolise the ordinary and the everyday.
- **Is silent...**, while Mary and Joseph (symbols of the 'First Christmas') take the long journey around the spiral to appreciate and notice the world around them. Silence is symbolic of reflection and thanksgiving, to be grateful we need to be still and calm enough to notice what is around us, as often we don't notice, miss or appreciate anything until it is gone! During the school day we light a candle every lunch time with the children as they sit down at tables to await lunch and children give thanks for what ever they feel like -from the air we breathe to their friends and the food, the rain and the sun, their clothes and their school. Mostly children give thanks to their parents who give money and time to put in the playground and look after the school. Candle light symbolises the human spirit. We are amazing creatures!
- **Singing traditional Christmas songs and other songs** the children have learnt as a school community symbolises the simple instrument of the human voice and the power of singing together. Singing symbolises simplicity and that we really have all we need if we look inside of ourselves (symbolised by voices) and to each other as a community (singing together and all joining in). We start singing as Mary and Joseph reach the centre of the spiral where they finally become a family when their baby is born and their lives change forever. A baby does change lives forever and is a powerful symbol of hope and love which are unseen, invisible forces that we only really notice when they have gone missing or through a death. Our school really is about families and what children bring into our lives, which we can forget in the daily living if we are not careful. The baby Jesus symbolises the beginnings of families, our children, our hopes and dreams and love.

All this may only take 10-15 minutes but the power is in the symbolism, which we hope you discuss with your children at quiet and peaceful times at home, maybe as they listen in the dark as they settle for sleep or going on a long drive. Please include them when choosing things to bring along for the spiral (you will take them home again that same night) and share why you would choose them with your child. Please keep your children close to you during the spiral and sit together as a family. All children need to be seated as there are many candles alight and movement is also distracting. Due to the number of young children the spiral is a short experience as we are sure even Jesus would have let out a few wails.

Please bring:

- A tea-light candle for the spiral and candles to hold. Matches to light.
- Objects to place around the spiral to symbolise our connection with the physical world, plant world, animal world and the people world (see list above for ideas).
- Any fresh cut rosemary if you have any (it is a symbol of our first home for the school at the old house, we had a whole bush outside the kitchen- but now it is bring your own!) for our spiral.
- Camping chairs, picnic rugs, plates of delicious food to share (symbolic breaking of the bread and a symbol of celebration and festivity).

We also give everyone a pebble to place in our world wishing well and ask them to make a silent wish for the world, a wish from the heart, as they line up to place the pebble in the well.

We eat, talk and play with our children.

*We want to invoke an 'attitude of gratitude' for our daily lives by looking at what we **do** have (rather than what we don't have) and having the privilege and honour of having a child to raise. We want to value families and togetherness in simple ways.*