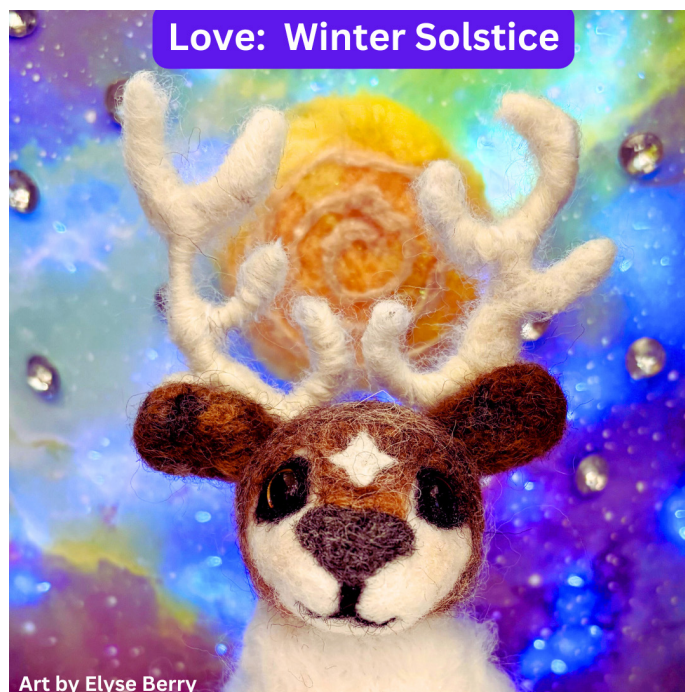


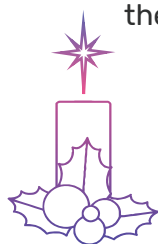
Children's Moment



Reindeer, also called caribou, have a special connection to the sun and the changing seasons in many folktales from Northern Europe. Long before Santa's reindeer flew across the sky, a Reindeer Goddess was said to carry the sun between her antlers at the Winter Solstice. Given that males shed their antlers in the winter, it was up to the great Mother Deer to carry the sun on the longest night, bringing the return of the sun. In the Indigenous Sami language, the word for herd is "eallu," which means to follow the animals—not boss them around. These ancient traditions remind and invite us to follow the rhythms of nature and to learn from our living connection with creation.

This year, Winter Solstice lands on the Fourth Sunday of Advent, when we celebrate love. It seems like a wonderful opportunity to reflect on both of these sacred events. What might we learn about the nature of love from our animal friends and the rhythm of the seasons? I wonder about the great Mother Deer bringing the dawn, showing us how love not only returns but is held by antlers that have lived through countless winters. Such love is persistent, hard earned, and has made it through the long darkness. No matter what we do on earth, the seasons still change, and the Great Mother carries the light.

I think about how herding is more about following, listening, and being in right-relationship than anything else. I imagine Mary and Joseph herding each other to Bethlehem, resting beside Jesus in the manger before journeying to safer pastures. How might you herd in love, herd with love, and bring the light with you this week?



*"...WHEN THEY SAW THE **STAR**, THEY WERE FILLED WITH **JOY**..."*

MATTHEW 2:10