

Rudolf Steiner announced **the School of Spiritual Science** when the General Anthroposophical Society was founded during the Christmas conference of 1923. He planned to organize it into three Classes and various Sections. During the course of 1924 Rudolf Steiner gave 38 esoteric lessons (known as Class Lessons) to people who joined the First Class. Twenty-six of these lessons were in Dornach, Switzerland. The Class Lessons comprise a complete spiritual course of 19 fundamental lessons given between February 15 and August 2, 1924, several lessons given at other locations, and seven 'recapitulation' lessons, September 6 to 20, 1924, which take up the themes of the first part of the 19 lessons in a modified form. Rudolf Steiner had planned to establish a Second and Third Class but was not able to do so because of his illness and death.

Rudolf Steiner had already led an esoteric school from 1904 to the beginning of World War I. This school had three departments in accordance with esoteric tradition. The three Classes of the School of Spiritual Science represent a metamorphosis and further development of that school. The esoteric lessons which Rudolf Steiner gave to the First Class within the General Anthroposophical Section contain meditative verses with explanations. He was very firm about restricting knowledge of the esoteric content of this "Michael School" to a group of people who fulfilled certain requirements. This group had made a commitment to follow a meditative path of development, to collaborate with each other, and to represent Anthroposophical work in daily life.

The lessons were taken down in shorthand with Rudolf Steiner's permission. After Rudolf Steiner's death, members of the Executive Council and later also "Class Holders" designated by them, began conveying this esoteric course material to members of the First Class, using the shorthand notes as a basis. Today there are many groups of Class Holders around the world who meet to discuss questions concerning the work within the First Class and propose new Class Holders to the leadership of the General Anthroposophical Section. The Executive Council at the Goetheanum is currently responsible for the General Anthroposophical Section.

The content of the First Class is conveyed either in Rudolf Steiner's own words or in "free renderings," where the Class Holder explains and introduces the mantras in his or her own way. In addition, conversations and any other forms of work based on participants' individual meditative work with the mantras are organized in various ways.

During the decades following Rudolf Steiner's death the content of the Class Lessons did not remain within the circle of people for whom they were intended and they were published in a somewhat dubious form. The Trustees of Rudolf Steiner's Estate then published an official version of them in 1992 in collaboration with the Executive Council at the Goetheanum. Although anyone can obtain these texts today, which were not intended for individual study, the members of the First Class work with them in accordance with the prerequisites for membership in the School of Spiritual Science, by placing central emphasis on speaking and listening.

If you have been a member of the Anthroposophical Society for two or more years and would like to join the First Class you may contact our area Class reader Clark Remington (773) 955-5955.