

# North American Newsletter

Volume 26, No. 2, Advent, 2018

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## Annunciation

Rev. Lisa Hildreth

Change is often announced to us. When dark storm clouds roll in, we know that rain is coming. Spring is heralded by mild temperatures, the smell of damp earth, and a subtle greening of the earth. One can even look at a person's biography and see certain tendencies and interests develop that can announce to us the future of that person.

Change can also come suddenly, with no warning. When this occurs, it can feel like a blow of destiny — and the reason for this change may only be understood years later, or even after death.

Then there are times when one's knowledge of the future comes directly to us out of the spirit. We many not actually experience what Mary did — an angel appearing out of the heavens, telling us our task; but we may experience our annunciation as an inner knowing, a quiet voice that says: this is what you need to do now, this is your work.

The tasks given to us by the spirit are not easy. They do not allow us to stay within our comfort zone. Instead, they ask for an element of self-sacrifice and for us to rise up and be more than we were before.

But at the same time that they ask for more, they also offer help. Mary is overshadowed by the Most High and filled with the Holy Spirit. These powers not only help with the conception and bearing of her child, they also aid Mary in her spiritual role in relation to the being of Jesus Christ.

Painting: Dante Gabriel Rossetti, *The Annunciation*. Image from Wikimedia Commons.

We too are never asked to do more without also being given the powerful help of the spirit. And the stronger we become, both in ourselves and in our connection with the spirit, the more we can offer to the world.

So in this Advent season, let us learn to become like Mary — let us learn to receive the annunciation of the spirit. And like Mary, let us conceive and bear that which needs to come forth from us and flow out into the world.

## The Path from Advent to Epiphany

Rev. Cindy Hindes

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There is an inner pathway that leads from Advent through Epiphany. It spirals inward, dwells for twelve days in the light of Christmas, and turns to spiral outward again at Epiphany, January 6.

The path already began to turn inward at Michaelmas, for the dragon that we were meant to conquer is the rapacity of our own natural selfishness, the dragon of our own lower nature. This is, of course, not a one-time victory. The battles continue. And as we traverse the land of the dead in November, through the mighty pictures of the future from the Apocalypse, they warn us that we are to continue with the tasks and trials of cleansing.

In December and Advent, we continue to prepare for the future. And inwardness increases both in our own soul and in the mood of the darkening natural world. The inwardness of both worlds finds its expression in the blue of the altar — a deep blue of infinite calm like the sky before sunrise. This is most appropriate, for in preparing for Christmas we are preparing for and awaiting the birth of the Sun God within us.

This inward turning from Michaelmas to Christmas is a picture for the development of all humankind. Each of us repeats this path in our own development. So just as the history of earthly man began with that fateful apple, each of us is given the apple of our destiny before entering this earthly life. On top of that destiny there rests the potential to ignite a higher self.

In the Advent Garden for children, this potential is symbolized by the candle in the apple that each child carries on the spiral path toward the large central candle that the angel has lighted. We all spiral inward on our path through life, looking for the true center, led by our angel who has gone there before us. Each of us moves toward this center in his own characteristic way. Some of us, like some children, stride quickly and blithely, interested in everything there is to see in earth's garden. Others are more cautious, anxious to protect their light, and to find just the right place for it.

But eventually we all finally arrive at the center. This center is Christ's deed on earth. It is a deed that began its visible course with the birth of Jesus at Christmas, prepared by the illuminating plan of the Holy Spirit. At Christmas the altar is illuminated, clothed in the pure white sunrise of spirit light and the pale lilac of new beginnings.

The tender brightness of the twelve holy days of Christmas is a time set apart from the rest of the year. Its twelve days mark the difference between the solar year and the lunar year. Day by day, the Christmas light shines into each of the twelve months of the coming year. It illuminates our future. It is a time that brings special blessings into our coming lives when we work with its deepening and enlivening. Participating in the act of humankind's consecration during each of these twelve days helps to bring special blessings for the coming year. It helps His light to illuminate us, to be ignited within us.

Then on January 6, at Epiphany, the light from the altar deepens into a warmly incarnated magenta red-violet, a red that faces the darkness of the future with love and trust. Humankind's future was illuminated by the star of Jesus' birth. Just as the children have lit their candles in the center of the Advent garden, we have again ignited our higher self at the altar, letting it shine in the center of our being, during this twelve-day season. Now at Epiphany we begin to spiral outward again, out into the world, to illuminate what is still dark, once again to face Herod's forces of evil that result from human selfishness.

## Our Foundation is Love

Rev. Jonah Evans

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Some weeks ago there was yet another mass shooting. Robert Bowers murdered 11 souls at Tree of Life Synagogue in Pittsburgh. He was then found and taken to the hospital. And as Robert was being wheeled into the emergency room, he yelled, "Death to all Jews." The nurse caring for him felt those words painfully in his heart. The nurse knew the synagogue well because his parents often worshiped there. And so while deeply worried that his parents were two of the victims of this killer, nevertheless this Jewish nurse decided to care for this enemy, silently. And when the media asked why he hadn't refused care because he was a Jew, he said, "When I looked into his eyes, I didn't see evil — I saw confusion and fear. I cared for this man because I wanted him to feel compassion, to feel love, and I wanted him to feel it from a Jew."

In chapter 21 of the *Book of Revelation*, we hear that the New Jerusalem, our future earth, is built of precious stones. What could be more precious than freely given love in the face of fear? What could be more foundational for a true humanity than a compassionate heart standing before his enemy?

Dear friends, just like the Jewish nurse, we too can create love in the growing anxiety and fear of our times. For every deed of compassion and love that comes to light in this darkness creates a precious stone, a spiritual stone that will become the firm foundation of a new earth.

## **Seventy-Year Anniversary Celebration of the Founding of The Christian Community in New York City and on the Continent**

Rev. Gisela Wielki, Madelon Holder, Deborah (Bromley, Hilton) Winograd

**Advent, December 8 - 9, 2018**

*From Rev. Gisela Wielki:*

It was a very packed and spirited event with a wonderful balance of humor and seriousness in all the presentations. The mood was buoyant. The house was full. People felt that they really participated in something historic, without being stuck in the past and with lively exchanges between members and friends from the ‘surrounding country’ in our rather short breaks. With Christian Maclean and his wife we had even a participant and contributor from overseas with us.

I am not sure we would have celebrated the seventieth anniversary had it not been for Rev. Bastiaan Baan’s urging that it should be acknowledged. We celebrated forty, because Rev. Verner Hegg was still alive and could be with us, and we acknowledged fifty, of course, because it is half a century. But why seventy? And then I thought that it might be a really unique experience for the congregation to have three priests (Erk Ludwig, Jim Hindes, Gisela Wielki) - each a septuagenarian - who have worked for a substantial length of time in New York City, in the years between 1972 to now, come together for one more time for a special event. It was then that the year seventy struck a chord. Rev. Rafal

Nowak joined us. The New York congregation was his doorway to The Christian Community, as it was for Revs. Paul Corman, Susan Lowndes, Susan Locey, and Marcus Knausenberger. Revs. Franziska Hesse, Bastiaan Baan and Liza Marcatto were supporting visitors on Saturday and Rev. Oliver Steinrueck, having only just returned from Berlin, joined us for part of Sunday. We all felt that the event was casting its light across the continent and also contributed to the growing awareness of the coming one hundred year anniversary for the whole of The Christian Community.



From left to right: Revs. Rafal Nowak, Erk Ludwig, Franziska Hesse, Gisela Wielki, Jim Hindes, Bastiaan Baan, Liza Marcatto.

*From Madelon Holder:*

Attending the 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary gathering was to live in the word *Become*. Remembering in the present the past connections that brought us to The Christian Community leaves us facing the future with questions that we all live with and could now explore together. The presenters raised in their contributions some of the following issues:

- The power of the sacraments to change the life forces that live between us. (Wielki)
- The geological foundations, particular to New York City and Pala in San Diego county (near Los Angeles, the first West coast congregation) and the precious and surprising treasures they yield: garnets in the former and tourmaline in the latter. (Nowak)
- The ability of the gospel writers to read the life of Christ in etheric seed form and how our interpretations can remain relevant by understanding this. (Hindes)
- The new faculty to actively call upon our thinking as a third element in the transubstantiation of bread and wine. (Ludwig)

Christian Maclean, UK, publisher of Floris Books shared with us vivid portraits of the pioneers who brought this Religious Renewal to North America, including Verner Hegg, the first American to be ordained and the first priest in New York City. In between we were refreshed by all our artistic presenters, Ted Pugh, Fern Sloan, Laurie Portocarrero, Christina Porkert, David Ralph, and Robb Crease.



*From Deborah (Bromley, Hilton) Winograd:*

I began attending the Christian Community in New York City around 1978, by way of an Anthroposophical study group, led by Shirley Latessa, that included theater actors. Rev. Gisela Wielki and Rev. James Hindes were the resident priests during my time there. So this conference felt like a reunion, with some people I hadn't seen in 20 or 30 years.

Along with the picturing of precious gems, garnets and tourmalines, and minerals forming underground, we saw a map of where The Act of Consecration of Man is celebrated on this continent, across the various time zones. This had a special meaning for me: For several years, I have spent time in Sedona, Arizona, whose longitude on this map shows a distinct vacancy. The landscape in this area evokes such a sense of the sacred in me, I felt the need to offer a response in kind. So years ago I started sharing, like a prayer, passages of The Act of Consecration that I remember clearly. The phenomena of the earth and mineral kingdom are vivid there, and I have wondered how to rightly interpret their energies with our understanding of the Christ impulse. Now, Rev. Nowak's research has led me to Dr. Friedrich Benesch's book, *Apocalypse: The Transformation of Earth*, so my own offering can evolve.

During our “greetings from afar,” we heard from Rev. Paul Corman, in Peru. He was part of our actors’ study group in NY all those years ago, and I witnessed his discovery of The Christian Community and consequent pursuit of the priesthood. I feel deep appreciation for his remarkable journey.



Ted Pugh was also in that study group, and here he was this weekend, still performing. Along with Fern Sloan and Laurie Portocarrero, his Michael Chekhov ensemble presented Thornton Wilder's *Three Minute Plays*. Their acting approach cast a marvelous spell in the room. Their voices seemed to sculpt the words out of the air. Many years ago, I performed with his ensemble, and one occasion stands out for me: The Christian Community in New York hosted an international conference, attended by Rev. Dr. Benesch. Our group of actors created a short play from the transcripts of Joan of Arc's trial, and performed it for this event. For me, that entire encounter had a lasting impact.

In one of the presentations a question was raised: how can we more proactively communicate the power of the sacraments, even in subtle ways with the people life puts us in contact with? It was taken up in a group discussion circle the next day. We

acknowledged the solemnity, the formal religious aspects, the language of the service. Suggestions included a better flow between the Anthroposophical Society and The Christian Community, to enhance outreach. As one member noted, he found us by googling "Christianity and Reincarnation." The immersion of the service can be deeply internal, but we want the fruits of our introversion to be expressed in the world, to connect with other people. And just as our thoughts have a living being, our choice of words are setting energies in motion as we form our intentions for the future.



Last, but not least, Robb Creese told the tale of "The Spider of Light." I wouldn't dream of stealing his thunder by describing it, in the hope that others may hear it too someday — it is priceless!

## From Seed to Harvest — Six Years in North America

Rev. Bastiaan Baan, Seminary Director

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When I came to North America in January 2013 to work at the priest training, I began my task with two students in their second year of training. After they left for their internship, there was a school year without any students. Trying to make a virtue of this inevitability, I gave a lecture tour that brought me to most of the congregations in North America. It gave me the opportunity to meet the congregations, to give orientation courses about the priest training and to find, step-by-step, new students for the next years. Besides that, we began to develop a curriculum for a complete priest training — until then, only two years of training were realized.

What a difference when I compare these first experiences with the lecture tour that I gave during this summer and autumn 2018! The circumstances of the seminary now are quite different than six years ago.

The two students with whom we begun in 2013, Lisa Hildreth and Emma Heirman, have been ordained. This year we have a group of 10 students (full time and half time) in our first year. Four other students are in internships and three students are in their last year of priest training.

Step by step, our Open Courses have developed to public events with 30 to 60 guests, strengthening relationships with friends who support the work of the seminary with great interest and offer practical and financial help.

Whereas the beginnings of my work in North America were nothing but a tiny seed (each seminary director seems to have to begin from scratch), the fruit of six years of intensive work is visible nowadays. Wait for the priest ordinations in Spring Valley on March 30<sup>th</sup> and 31<sup>st</sup>, when the harvest is ripe!

Finally, when I compare my first and my last lecture tour, I realize how deeply and strongly we are connected, the seminary and the congregations. Whereas in 2013 these conferences had the quality of a first introduction, the lecture tour in this year had – as our Lenker Oliver Steinrueck expressed in his farewell talk – the quality of a finale in a symphony: all the instruments sounded harmoniously, fortissimo together! Conferences were held in Devon, Chicago, Los Angeles, Sacramento, Vancouver, Boston,



New York, Hillsdale and Washington DC. This year the emphasis was more on deepening the religious and spiritual substance of The Christian Community. The themes were connected with the content of existing and future books: *Old and New Initiation*, *The Lord of the Elements*, *Evil as a Challenge*, *The Future of the Earth*, *How to Forge a Relationship with Those who have Died*.

In advance it was announced that the proceeds of the conferences would go to the seminary. In total, we received more than \$21,000 — an amazing result of this ‘Finale’! I say farewell to my dear colleagues, our dear congregations, and our dedicated members of The Christian Community in a mood of overflowing gratitude.

Although I will return to the Netherlands at the end of December, due to the expiration of my visa, the future will hopefully give opportunities to make short visits to North America, to teach at the seminary and to meet congregations.

## A Letter from Camp

Rev. Carol Kelly, East Coast Camp Director

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We all meet moments of pure delight, when the world is good and true, when we are at our best, when the people around us and the forces of nature all seem to be giving us a *yes*. This is life at Christian Community Camp!

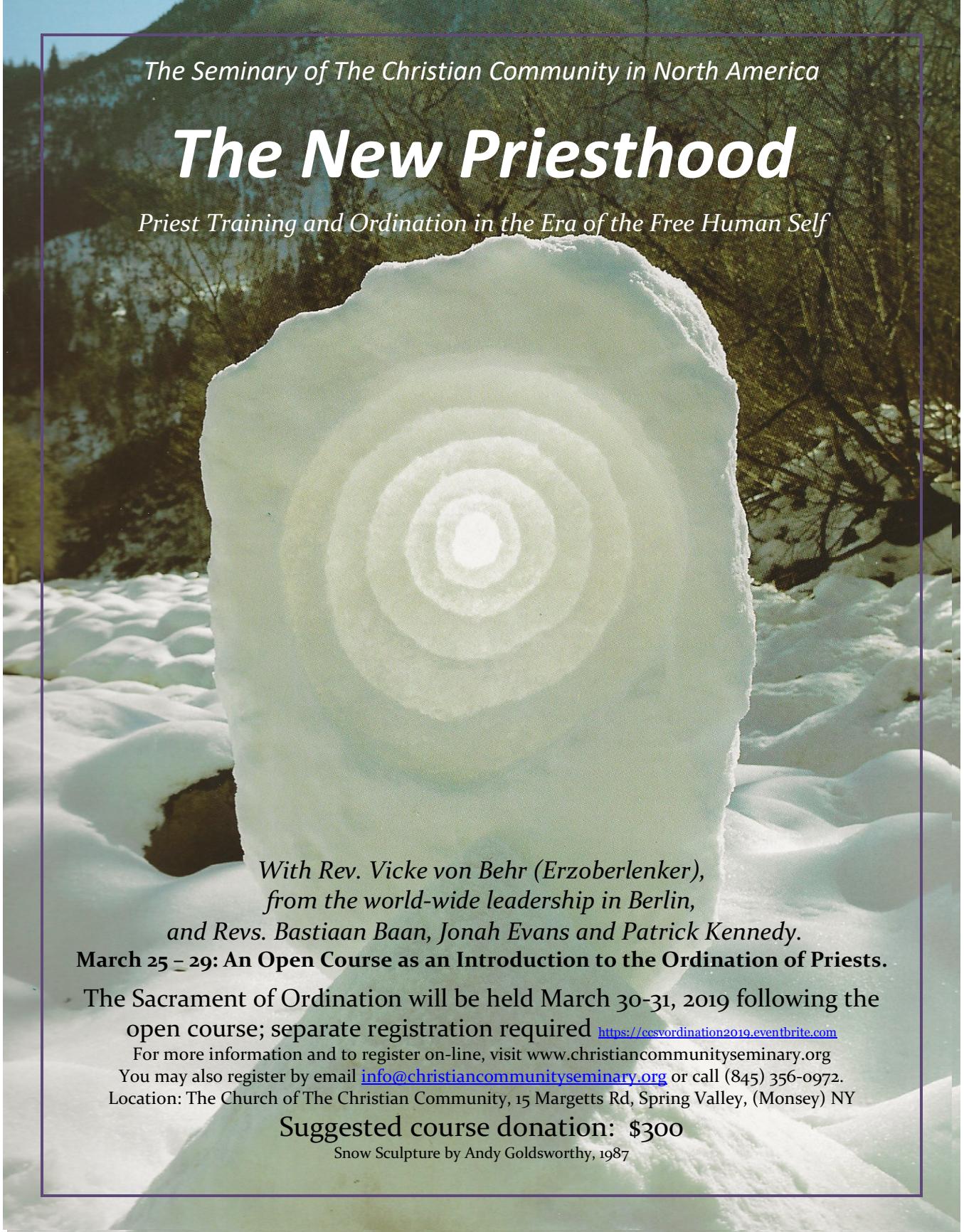
The theme was ***balance*** in every sense of the word. We balanced stones on top of one another, bodies in human pyramids, waking and sleeping, fun and work, reverence and sheer craziness. The campers and counselors sang in wonderful harmonies. The meals were not only balanced but delicious and varied beyond belief! We had to balance our kayaks, our temperaments, our energy levels. Jack Petrash worked with the children in calligraphy, Martha Loving in watercolor painting and Victoria Capon in all kinds of crafts.

Children bring moments of honesty. We meet ourselves, our powerlessness, sometimes our weaknesses. We learn to bring about a balance between our feelings about ourselves and what is actually needed in a given situation. This can lead us to a humble place, where we can turn to something higher.

We don't know what is wanted of us until somehow it's right in front of us and we get to practice responding to it. We learn to ask for and receive grace. We learn to work with the angels, to feel “carried” by them and to offer our joy and our wonder in return.

There are no words to adequately describe the miracle of camp. It is a precious time of rejuvenation, healing for the whole world, and a great gift to all who take part in it.

My heartfelt thanks for the amazing selfless work of counselors, cooks, staff members and Nils Cooper.



*The Seminary of The Christian Community in North America*

# **The New Priesthood**

*Priest Training and Ordination in the Era of the Free Human Self*

*With Rev. Vicke von Behr (Erzoberlenker),  
from the world-wide leadership in Berlin,*

*and Revs. Bastiaan Baan, Jonah Evans and Patrick Kennedy.*

**March 25 – 29: An Open Course as an Introduction to the Ordination of Priests.**

The Sacrament of Ordination will be held March 30-31, 2019 following the open course; separate registration required <https://ccsvordination2019.eventbrite.com>

For more information and to register on-line, visit [www.christiancommunityseminary.org](http://www.christiancommunityseminary.org)

You may also register by email [info@christiancommunityseminary.org](mailto:info@christiancommunityseminary.org) or call (845) 356-0972.

Location: The Church of The Christian Community, 15 Margetts Rd, Spring Valley, (Monsey) NY

**Suggested course donation: \$300**

Snow Sculpture by Andy Goldsworthy, 1987

## Attending the Founding of The Christian Community in Moscow

Rev. Nora Minassian, Zoe Scoulos, Nancy Bannister-Char

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**Michaelmas, October 12 -14, 2018**

*From Rev. Nora Minassian:*

After 28 years of trials, determination, and community power, the Founding of The Christian Community in Moscow took place during the October 12-14 weekend. Priests from different congregations in Europe had traveled back and forth to Moscow over 28 years to carry the services — wrestling and overcoming layers of hindrances including language, visas and funds. However, the sending of a full-time Russian priest, Anna Geyer, in 2017 was essential preparation and direction finally for the founding of the community. With her energetic, grounded, and enthusiastic nature, Anna, who often goes by Annoushka, was the go-to person helping with many big and small questions in organizing the weekend. Rev. Dieter Hornemann along with several other priests from Europe and members and friends from far and near provided the tremendous support needed to make the founding of Moscow possible and an important life experience for many who attended.



On the first day, a performance by the Helena von Negelein Eurythmy Ensemble opened the founding celebrations. After welcoming words by Rev. Gerhard Ertlmaier, Lenker for Russia, there was time for various congregations from around the world to meet each other, followed by a talk on *Christianity in the Slavic World and The Christian Community* by Tomáš Boněk, priest in the Czech Republic, a talk on *The History of The Christian Community in the Russian-Speaking World* by Deiter Hornemann, priest in Germany and Russia, a talk on *The Holy Sophia in the Eastern World—Russian Christianity in the Past and Present* by Anna Geyer and *The Christian Community in the Future* by Vicke von Behr, Erzoberlenker of The Christian Community. The celebrations concluded with the many contributions from different communities, offering their gifts and festive congratulations to the Moscow community.

Three of us from The Christian Community of Pennsylvania, wishing to bring the west to the east and to support and celebrate the founding, decided to be present: Nancy Bannister-Char, Zoe Scoulos and myself. Through raising funds during our own communities' 40th Anniversary celebration, as well as through the help of several anonymous donors, we were able to bring a number of gifts for the Moscow community, which included silk clothes for their nature table,

small symbolic gifts for each of the four kingdoms of their advent garden, as well as \$2,400. We offered these gifts through a skit about three wise ones coming from the west to the east, traveling not on camels, but on eagles with Philadelphia Eagles t-shirts (which we left for their youth), and with Eagle wings of silk. At the end of the skit, in addition to these gifts, we also offered the invisible gifts of our names, which would persist and last when the visible ones are used up; Zoe, in Greek means life, Nora in African, Arabic as well as several European languages means light or illuminator, Nancy comes from the same source and diminutive of Ann or Anna or Annoushka, which means grace. Thus, we offered our invisible gifts of Life, Light and Grace and with Annoushka, grace upon grace – praying that the Moscow community continue its founding on these existentially essential gifts – life, light and love.



We came back with a sense that indeed we are one community, whether we are west of far east or east of far west, we are always turning to the same direction every time we gather before our altars to pray.

*From Zoe Scoullos:*

This was a trip that I was drawn to from the moment Nora asked, “Who wants to celebrate the new arrival of The Christian Community in Moscow?” Was it because I read somewhere in Steiner’s books that the next epoch, called Philadelphia, will be spear headed by the Slavic world or was it because I was interested in experiencing the Russian people’s survival of their historical biography?

Moscow, on the Moskva River in western Russia is a Cosmopolitan capital. Nora, Nancy and I visited the Kremlin and I was intrigued with the tsarist treasures and the complex where the president resides. The many churches in the Kremlin are an embodiment of the Russian peoples’ devotion to Mother Mary, Christ Jesus, Father God and the Spiritual world. Outside of the Kremlin walls is the Red Square. It is home to Lenin’s Mausoleum and the colorful onion shaped domes of St. Basil’s Cathedral which we visited on the second day of our stay. The famous Metro System was also impressive. Its continuous escalator downward underground to the platforms seemed endless and the number of people using it showed that this is a Russian person’s daily transportation. Each platform was uniquely designed with high ceilings, special lighting, sculptures, marble walls and/or intricate stained glass windows. Moscow’s Metro is considered superior to any in the capitalist societies.

Of course, the Russian Orthodox churches with their icons displayed everywhere near the altar were familiar to me because of my own Greek Orthodox heritage.

After the celebratory conference in Moscow, Nancy and I took the overnight train to St. Petersburg. Meanwhile Nora had left for the priest synod in Hillsdale, NY. We slept well in our

bunk beds. Upon arrival, we were met by Elena who helped us find our way to our hostess, Valentine's, flat. Her warm enthusiasm lit the way for two days of sheer adventure. My favorites were the Hermitage Museum which holds Rembrandt's painting, *The Prodigal Son*, and the cruise we took around this imperial city of rivers and bridges.

*From Nancy Bannister-Char:*

Regarding the Moscow trip, I think the most amazing thing that stands out in my mind is the fact that people (especially those in The Christian Community) despite differences in language and upbringing and the locale where they reside are essentially very similar. Good-natured humor translates without a translator. Coffee or tea needs no translator. We like the same things! It was, of course, so refreshing to see the familiar altar with similar candles and the Michaelmas color. Hearing The Act of Consecration of Man in the Russian language one day and the Georgian language the next, brought a new power and strength to this service — the strength of familiarity despite not knowing the exact words. If one is familiar with the service, one could “imagine” understanding what was said. Christian Community people from Russia, Georgia, Germany, Belgium, Holland, Finland, the United States, etc. look essentially the same, and the common language was the service itself.

I was most impressed with the many young people who also attended the conference. Many were fluent in three languages! Waldorf-educated young people have an amazing ease and confidence about them. Since they fit in, one feels that one fits in as well.

It really was such an honor to be able to go to Moscow and feel the familiarity of The Christian Community there. It was such a wonderful coming together.



## **Report on Preparation Meeting for a North American Conference in 2020**

### **ASK2020 Atlanta — Walking with Christ**

**Katherine Jenkins and Rev. Craig Wiggins**

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We would like to share a brief account of the workshop we experienced in Atlanta on Thursday and Friday, November 15 and 16. The participants in the workshop were the Carrying Group of the Atlanta Affiliate of The Christian Community and four priests who have taken on the task of shepherding the 2020 Conference.

In attendance were Revs. Oliver Steinrueck, Coordinator for North America (Lenker), Emma Heirman, Carol Kelly, and Craig Wiggins; locally Angela Foster, Barbara Bittles, Bob and Betty Hare, Gabriela Muresan, Katherine Jenkins, Melissa Grable, and Roberta Ricketts. Not only Atlanta is represented in this ‘local’ group, but also Auburn, AL and Nashville, TN.

We opened with a lecture by Rudolf Steiner from *Supersensible Influences* (CW 216), given on September 29, 1922 in Dornach, which was very appropriate for setting the mood and focus of the work to come. We each shared how we imagined the 2020 Conference. We then began to wrestle with the theme and to work on how to raise public consciousness around it. This took up much time over the two days of deliberation. “To whom do we want to extend an invitation? How do words resound and touch people?” Many other aspects of announcing our plans entered the discussions. Our conclusion was to use the phrases, inspired from the Gospels:

Ask, Seek, Knock - ASK Atlanta 2020 - Walking with Christ.

We delegated responsibility for various elements of the tasks, as organizers and “boots on the ground.” Much of the planning starts with securing a location, and from that, a date. We are looking for spaces available when the priests are most likely to be able to get away from their congregations, which seems to be late June or early-to-mid July. There may be other conferences in that same time period, but this is best for The Christian Community. Of course, a first reaction is that it is hot and steamy in Atlanta that time of year, but no matter where a group goes, there are always weather challenges of one kind or another. We have air conditioning!

We looked at workshops, cultural events, presenters, and speakers; at food, child care, youth, and adults; facilities and grounds for day and night, inside and out. Watch for more information over the next year and beyond, as everything unfolds.

#### ***Canadian Residents wishing to subscribe to Perspectives:***

Rev. Susan Locey has asked that it be announced that there is an error in the subscription information provided by the *Perspectives* periodical, which is published out of the UK. Dean Rachael is not the contact person for Canada. Instead, Canadian residents should subscribe through the following website:

<http://thechristiancommunity.co.uk/perspectives/>

Thank you.

## A Hundred Years of The Christian Community (Part 1)

### What can we gain for the future by looking back in time?

Rev. Ulrich Meier in conversation with Dr. Peter Selg and Rev. Vicke von Behr, Erzoberlenker

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*The idea for this conversation came from Vicke von Behr, as a preparation for the centenary of the founding of The Christian Community in 1922. This article was originally published in Die Christengemeinschaft. The following is a reprint of the English translation which appeared in Perspectives.*

**Ulrich Meier** | Professor Selg, I understand that you have agreed to write a biography of Friedrich Rittelmeyer, Emil Bock and Rudolf Frieling in the context of the centenary. From today's perspective, how does The Christian Community relate its own founding to anthroposophy and to the anthroposophical movement?

**Vicke von Behr** | Our relationship to Rudolf Steiner is of primary importance; without it, we cannot ask about our relationship to anthroposophy or, indeed, about the nature of anthroposophy itself. Today, the relationship that the priests have to Rudolf Steiner cannot be compared with what was possible at the time of the founding. Then, Rudolf Steiner took these relatively young people by the hand, along with a few older ones, to bring about what the spiritual world hoped and expected for the development of church Christianity.

I believe that the relationship to Rudolf Steiner is a solid, grounded and trusting one for all priests working today. However, the relationship with anthroposophy is becoming a challenge, in my view. For some years, we have had an ever-improving relationship with the Executive Council of the Anthroposophical Society, with whom we also reflect on these topics. But at the same time, the question arises over and again: How does the circle of priests stand in relation to the anthroposophical movement and to the Anthroposophical Society? Over ninety percent of priests are members of the School of Spiritual Science; the priesthood could not do its work without its living source in anthroposophy. At the same time, it is an esoteric circle of its own. The question of how we can preserve and expand this existential relationship as our centenary approaches, will be decisive for our future.

**Peter Selg** | To a certain extent I view The Christian Community from the other side, from Rudolf Steiner's perspective, because I have become ever more concerned with the history of Rudolf Steiner's work and his relation to the various movements founded through anthroposophy. In the case of The Christian Community, the picture has become clearer. On the one hand, there are close parallels with other daughter movements, which means, in my view, that it is mistaken to set The Christian Community apart from other anthroposophical institutions or daughter movements—the gesture of the foundation is very similar. On the other hand, there are of course differences.

Amongst other things, the intensity of Rudolf Steiner's attention for the priests' circle as it embarked on its development impresses me greatly. Of course, he had an intense relationship with the Stuttgart teachers, with Ita Wegman and other doctors, but in his dealings with these young theologians and priests, Rudolf Steiner is present—sometimes in a more personal way,

sometimes more existential—beyond what we see in the histories of the other movements. And the records of the priests' meetings with Dr Steiner are particularly rich.

The relationship to The Christian Community is so special, both with Steiner himself and with the being of anthroposophy, that it has given me much to think about. I believe that these relationships have great potential for the future. Because it does seem to me that the way the priesthood could get to know Rudolf Steiner, in the work that led to the foundation, is missing in the areas of medicine and special education.

On the other hand, there are the shadows, the tremendous tragedy: so many hopes, and then December 30, 1922, even though this date seems to be long ago. For example, one thinks of Rudolf Frieling celebrating with three people in Leipzig at Christmas 1923, where there had been a hundred the year before. This has been deeply engraved in the history of the two movements.

It is definitely not my intention to write a biography of Friedrich Rittelmeyer, Rudolf Frieling and Emil Bock; I wish to examine the question: how did their relationship with Rudolf Steiner and anthroposophy continue after this event? What impact did the situation of the Anthroposophical Society and The Christian Community have on their lives and their work? How did they lead The Christian Community? As the first three Erzoberlenkers, they were of course very close to Rudolf Steiner. I hope to show how their attempt to translate what was initially hard to understand can mean something very productive for the future. In addition, I would like to write a separate piece about the relationship between Rudolf Steiner and Friedrich Rittelmeyer, which is an important chapter in itself.

I think that for seminarists, and for everyone who comes to these things later, it would be illuminating to learn about the first three Erzoberlenkers at the time of the foundation, when they were so close to the spiritual impulse of the movement, and then the tense situation into which they entered. I don't intend to write a book of five hundred pages, but something easily grasped —that seems important to me.

**Ulrich Meier** | What you say about Rudolf Steiner's special relationship to the priesthood may be surprising to some historians. After all, there was the other side, namely, that Rudolf Steiner set great emphasis on not being seen in the role of founder of The Christian Community. That is probably the root of some confusion.

**Vicke von Behr** | Yes, it is indeed mysterious, because on the one hand, Steiner describes the founding of The Christian Community as one of the highlights of his life, and on the other hand he makes clear that he has done this as a private person. From the beginning he had a special relationship with Friedrich Rittelmeyer; indeed, he made it clear that without Rittelmeyer, the foundation would not have been possible. From the very beginning he saw Rittelmeyer as Erzoberlenker, in alignment with the spiritual world. Rittelmeyer hesitated for a long time, until in 1924 he was convinced by Rudolf Steiner that it would be necessary for the leadership of this religious movement that he accepted the role. Rudolf Steiner had even agreed to be present and take part in the appointment of Rittelmeyer as Erzoberlenker, which he was tragically unable to do. This promise had been a joyful surprise for the founders, especially after the lecture of December 30, 1922. We know that Rittelmeyer agreed with a heavy heart to take on the responsibility of Erzoberlenker. However, he requested that Rudolf Steiner would help him if he

should need his help, to which Steiner agreed. He describes in his memoirs that he experienced this as a promise that was honoured after Rudolf Steiner's death.

**Ulrich Meier** | Perhaps we can take a closer look at the lecture of December 30, 1922. At the beginning of the 1990s, I was able to interview someone who had heard the lecture, Crown Prince Georg Moritz von Sachsen-Altenburg. He said, 'Dr Steiner wanted to clear our heads! We all wanted to become priests at that time! He had to make it clear to us that everyone had his own job to do.' Of course, that's only one voice amongst others. The lecture was received very differently by the first generations of anthroposophists, Christian Community priests and members. What kind of picture can we have of this event today?

**Peter Selg** | I would like to say first that I don't think the lecture is comprehensible unless one looks at Rudolf Steiner's existential struggle with the Anthroposophical Society throughout that year and the following year, 1923: his deep shock over the ineffectiveness, the dearth of manpower and purposefulness of the Anthroposophical Society, his utter dissatisfaction that this Society and its School of Spiritual Science were neglecting their own tasks, and instead running to the rituals of The Christian Community as the culmination of anthroposophy.

I think Steiner is quite right when he says that he gave the lecture primarily for the Anthroposophical Society and not for the priests. On the other hand, there are phrases that he says he had to wring out of himself. They are hard to understand to this day, at least for me.

I understand that the priests felt as though the rug had been pulled out from under their feet, in contrast to what they had heard previously from Rudolf Steiner. Afterwards, as is well known, the lecture was distributed in part and utilized by the then-leadership of the Anthroposophical Society, with all the damage that that caused.

But if I see it correctly, Rudolf Steiner always said to the priests: Don't worry too much about it, do your work, it will all work out. But overall, it was a tragedy—and shortly afterwards, the Goetheanum burned down.

What is it like today? On the one hand, it is certainly much easier to understand the lecture by looking at the history of the Anthroposophical Society. I did this in my book on Rudolf Steiner's work. On the other hand, historians in The Christian Community, such as the Gädke brothers, make clear how unaware the founding priests were in certain respects: we have to take their exhilaration and a certain conceit into account. I am always amazed at how long the old attitudes continued, how some anthroposophists felt that the destiny of The Christian Community had nothing to do with them.

**Vicke von Behr** | I think that these are symptoms. As Peter Selg said, for Rudolf Steiner the most important question was how the anthroposophical movement could survive. He saw the possibility of a further weakening of the already weak Anthroposophical Society through The Christian Community, which had just been founded. I think we have to look more closely at how Rudolf Steiner's relationship to the anthroposophical movement, to which The Christian Community belongs, changed as a result of the Christmas Conference of 1923/24. It is a great riddle: The Christian Community was founded shortly before the Christmas Conference; then with the Christmas Conference came the foundation of the new mysteries, the School of Spiritual

Science; and in 1924 Rudolf Steiner said that The Christian Community had the task of helping to shape the new mysteries, indeed to become the bearer of a substantial part of these new mysteries. It can be clearly seen that he entered into a different and much freer relationship with the priesthood after the Christmas Conference.

Another part of the problem that we have with the lecture of December 30, 1922, is that people read what Steiner said then and, as if spellbound, do not take into account the changes that went on after the Christmas Conference. These changes affect the entire anthroposophical movement. We do not yet have sufficient clarity about what happened in the years 1922 - 1924. What he had in view for The Christian Community around 1921 seemed to be different again in 1922. Something must have happened in the spiritual world too, so that, for example, the ordination of priests which he inaugurated in 1922 is fundamentally different from what he had announced in 1921. When Emil Bock asked him, Steiner said that the form suggested in 1921 was traditional. That means it did not have any relation to the new mysteries. That was, I think, part of Rudolf Steiner's central struggle: How can that be made possible?

And then he took this enormous risk and the founding actually took place. But it was contested. The forces that wanted to obstruct the new mysteries were present, and could use The Christian Community as an instrument. Our founding colleagues worked from the best of their knowledge and conscience, but without realizing it, they were also destructive. This was, I think, what Rudolf Steiner struggled against in order to produce what was successful in 1924, but in 1922/23 it was not at all clear how it could succeed. That is also part of the mystery of the lecture of December 30, 1922.

**Peter Selg |** But that also affected the other daughter movements. If I see it correctly, Rudolf Steiner emphasized that The Christian Community is a public movement and not a church for anthroposophists. But this also applies to the Waldorf School, which is not a school for the children of anthroposophists. And biodynamic agriculture is there for everyone. All the daughter movements of anthroposophy seem to me to have a quality connected to Whitsun—they are there for humanity, not just for anthroposophists. Rudolf Steiner did not find any of these initiatives, but he did make them possible. This is their hallmark. To understand that completely, I believe, is also an opportunity available to people who were born later and who can have the development of Steiner's whole work, and contemporary history, in view.

*The second part of this interview will be in the next issue of this newsletter.*

## Movement in Our Movement

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Rev. Oliver Steinrueck, who has been the North American regional coordinator (Lenker) since 2000, was inducted into the World Leadership group (Circle of Seven) in December. For the time being he will have one foot in America and another in Germany, until his move to Berlin in the summer of 2019. The process for choosing a new Lenker for North America is well underway.

Rev. Rafal Nowak, who was one of the west coast priests who regularly visited the Los Angeles community after Rev. Cindy Hindes retired, is now the Los Angeles community priest. Rafal and his family moved from the Sacramento community to LA over the summer. Rev. Sanford Miller continues to carry the work in Sacramento.

Rev. Julia Polter took up a new task last February. She had a sending out of the Boston community and is currently working at a hospital in Boston where she is a hospital chaplain. Rev. Lisa Hildreth continues to carry the work in Boston congregation.

Rev. Francisca Hesse has been sent to Spring Valley where she is the new community priest. Francisca began her work there in November.

Rev. Susan Locey will be retiring from the Vancouver community in January. She plans to eventually settle in the Toronto area to be of help in that community.

Rev. Ann Burfiend will be leaving the Chicago congregation and taking up the work in Vancouver.

Rev. Craig Wiggins will be moving from San Francisco to Chicago, where he will be the new community priest. Rev. Erk Ludwig will carry the San Francisco congregation.

Rev. Bastiaan Baan, will be returning to the Netherlands in late December. For more details, see his article in this newsletter, *From Seed to Harvest — Six Years in North America*.

Rev. Anand Mandiaker is waiting for a visa. We hope that he will be able to return to the US soon to join Rev. Carol Kelly in the work in the Washington DC congregation.

The Seminary has announced that three candidates will be ordained on the last weekend of March in Spring Valley: Cheryl Prigg, Louis Gonzalez, and Matthias Giles. You are invited to attend! Please see the announcement on page 9 of this newsletter or on the seminary website: [christiancommunityseminary.org](http://christiancommunityseminary.org)