

The Christian Community

North American Newsletter

Volume 17, Nr. 2, Fall 2009,

www.thechristiancommunity.org

www.chicagoseminary.org

ANGELS AND ARCHANGELS

Marcus Knausenberger

Have you ever wondered what is it like to look into the eyes of an angel? The gospels describe many encounters with angelic beings, encounters which – at least initially – filled those individuals whose destinies led them to such a meeting with fear and astonishment. Given our popular imagination of these beings, it is only natural to wonder: Why? What is it that made these encounters so difficult to bear?



Angels are tasked with the guidance of individual destiny – of holding and protecting an individual's higher ego as long as that particular individual has yet to consciously establish that connection himself. Now, imagine for a moment what it is like to stand face to face with a being whose task it is to carry a complete picture of your particular destiny – yet, whose presence bears witness to the creative word which was spoken at the beginning: Human beings are created in the image of God. In this sense, it is not the encounter with an angelic being as such that induces fear or terror. In looking into the eyes of an angel, one gazes into the living image of one's own individual human destiny and in this act of perceiving, experiences how exceedingly far removed one is from the fulfillment of that destiny. That is terrifying.

As we approach Michaelmas, we can broaden this question to encompass the work of the archangels – beings whose mission goes beyond the concerns of individual human destiny to encompass the destiny of a particular period of time. Where is the boundary between individual human destiny and the destiny of our time? As human life grows in complexity, this distinction becomes more difficult to make.

Many of us feel we have been called in our own individual lives to awaken to the true extent to which our actions, thoughts and impulses impact our world and all that inhabit it. The defenses that exclaim: 'It's not my problem' or 'it's their fault' grow thin when we feel that our own destiny is increasingly interwoven with the activity of the Archangels. Indeed, answering the call of Michael challenges the human being to grow beyond the boundaries of purely personal concerns, to take up the concerns of our time and to become, in the true sense of the word, global citizens.

In coming to terms with our growing responsibilities as global human beings, we can sense the wisdom that brought the Archangel Michael into relationship with our particular period of time, for within his task – the confrontation with the powers of evil – is interwoven the destiny of human beings and the missions of the angels and archangels.

Marcus Knausenberger is a priest working in Devon PA

MICHAELMAS CONFERENCE IN NEW YORK

The New York City congregation is planning a local Michaelmas Conference for October 16-18, 2009 on the themes of "The Name of the Archangel" and "The Michaelic Trinity". Contact Erk Ludwig, 212-877-3577 for more details.



CONFERENCE ON MONEY

The Christian Community in Vaughan, Ontario, Canada will host a conference on **The Crisis of Money and the Crisis of Human Consciousness**. The conference will take place on 13 – 15 November, 2009. The main presenter will be John Alex-

andra, former Waldorf teacher, Class Reader in the School for Spiritual Science, Vice President at J.P. Morgan, co-founder and C.F.O. of New Century Bank, and author of Mephistopheles' Anvil: Forging a More Human Future. Eurythmy by Renate Krause

SEMINARY NEWS

The **web site** of the seminary has undergone a major face-lift and reversed its name. It is now **www.chicagoseminary.org**. Check us out and enjoy the slide shows on several of the pages. They allow a more visual entry into the life of the seminary. We welcome six new students in the fall:

Charlot Buschgens, Belgium

Maren Fritz, Germany

Travis Henry, USA

Paula Id, Finland

Thomas O'Keefe, USA

Maarit Anneli Vuori, Finland

OPEN COURSES AT THE CHICAGO SEMINARY Fall 2009

Sept 28–Oct 2 - **Seeing Our 21st Century World with Different Eyes:** Lincoln and Darwin at 200, King at 80 - John Alexandra, Vice President and CFO of New Century Bank, Phoenixville, PA

Oct 5–Oct 9 - **The Transition from the Old to the New Testament** - Rev. Oliver Steinrueck

Oct 12–Oct 16 - **Christ and the Earth** - Daniel Hafner

Oct 19–Oct 23 - **Gospel of Matthew** - Awakening to the Holy Spirit - Rev. Georg Dreissig, Author and Codirector of the seminary in Stuttgart, Germany

Nov 2–Nov 6 - **The Evolving of the Human Being and the Angels** - Rev. Gisela Wielki [This course will take place in Spring Valley, New York - see the brochure for details]

Nov 9–Nov 13 - **Encountering Evil:** Explorations into the Task of our Time - Douglas Sloan, Professor of History and Education Emeritus [Also in Spring Valley, NY]

Nov 16–Nov 20 - **Christology** - Rev. Erk Ludwig [Also in Spring Valley, NY]

Nov 30–Dec 4 - **Color:** The Deeds and Sufferings of the Light - Daniel Hafner

Dec 14–Dec 18 - **Advent:** The Second Coming - Rev. Richard Dancy

For details contact Gisela Wielki, P.O. Box 25603, Chicago, IL 60625, Tel./Fax 773-472-7041. Or visit the seminary's lovely **new web site**, along with its **new web address: <http://www.chicagoseminary.org>**. Have a look!

FREE COLUMBIA

Laura Summer

We are announcing the launching of a new endeavor in the arts: Free Columbia. In September 2009 Nathaniel Williams and I will begin offering a full time painting course in relation to anthroposophy.

The **Free Columbia Art Course** is a full time, year long

course which will take place in Ghent, NY. The course is based on the



Laura Summer, Composition Red

fundamentals of the art of painting as they appear and come to life through anthroposophy. We will seek out the colors and their relationships, the living laws of composition, light and darkness and the spring of imagination where all pictures have their source. In addition to painting and drawing, the course will include study of the basic elements of anthroposophy, history of art as an image of evolution, philosophy of aesthetics, (past and present), social questions in relation to art and economics, as well as other themes. We will work with a wide variety of media including watercolor, oil, egg tempera, charcoal, surface collage, block printing and pastel. The year will not consist solely of art. There will also be regular work in the community in various areas; everyone on this course will be integrated into the local community through work.

There are five positions for those interested in joining such a course this September of 2009. *There are neither material costs nor tuition for these positions.* Students will be housed in local homes in exchange for work. We will choose full-time students who show a strong commitment to following the path of the course. The course is open to all who want to pursue it. The capacities that one unfolds in artistic creativity benefit all areas of life, for human nature is not mechanical but artistic.

If you would like to learn more you can by visiting the web page, <http://www.freecolumbia.org/>. Or you can write us at freecolumbiaart@gmail.com or call Laura Summer at 518-672-7302 or Nathaniel Williams at 518-672-4090.

POEM

by Nelly Sachs

But perhaps God needs the longing, wherever else shall it dwell,
Which with kisses and tears and sighs fills
mysterious spaces of air--
And perhaps is invisible soil from which roots of stars grow and swell--
And the radiant voice across fields of parting which calls to reunion there?
O my beloved, perhaps in the sky of longing worlds have been born
of our love--
Just as our breathing, in and out, builds a cradle for life and death?
We are grains of sand, dark with farewell, lost in births' secret treasure trove,
Around us already perhaps future moons, suns, and stars blaze in a fiery wreath.



(Translated by Ruth and Matthew Mead, in *A Book of Women Poets from Antiquity to Now*, ed. by Aliko and Willis Barnstone)

FUTURE NOW! NEW PRESENCE OF CHRIST

World Congress in 2010

There will be a big international conference of The Christian Community, 21 -25 May, 2010, in Dortmund, Germany. The title is: *Future Now! New Presence of Christ* Visit the home page <http://www.futurenow2010.org>.



Alessandro Bruschetti, Resurrezione

INITIATIVES GROUP

A new North American group has formed, called into being through our regional coordinator, Oliver Steinrueck. This group is calling itself the Initiatives Group. It is looking toward the future of the North American Christian Community and trying to perceive what this future Christian Community might look like, what it wants to become. It is also trying to help midwife this future.

Long before the birth, the midwife accompanies the expectant mother's pregnancy, asking her how she feels, listening for the heartbeat, looking at pictures, determining the health of the child. She intervenes therapeutically if there are weaknesses or problems in mother or child. The midwife is present at the birth as a watchful assistant of the process, and to care for the child in the first minutes before handing it over to the mother. She helps with the first stages of the life between mother and child.

The Christian Community can be seen as a mother, pregnant with and continually birthing the future. The Initiatives Group is listening for the heartbeat of the future, looking at pictures (real and metaphorical), suggesting (and in certain areas enacting) helpful interventions for the health of the whole.

Over the summer and into the fall, the group has had one two-day meeting in San Francisco and a number of conference calls, to begin to listen and gather pictures. A more detailed report has been sent to each priest to be passed on to the community boards and delegates. A second meeting is scheduled for November, and of course continuing conference calls.

Early determinations are that indeed, the mother is pregnant! She is in some ways an aging mother (sixty years in North America) and will need some specific kinds of support. We midwives will continually need to do more listening, gather more pictures. In general



it seems obvious that the mother will at first need some strengthening, rejuvenating tonics. Since part of the future lies in the hands of younger priests, we are fortunate that we have already had the blessing addition of half a dozen or so in recent years, with more in the pipeline. New priests bring fresh impulses. It is hoped that these new ways will find their way into community life. And along with them it is hoped that more new folks will find their way

to The Christian Community, providing further stimulus and freshness.

One of the early pictures that emerged for the group was that many congregations are modestly 'hiding their light under a basket', and thereby unintentionally hindering that seeking newcomers can find them. So we want to take a closer look at the nature of congregational signage, phone book entries, answering machines; we want to update the North American web site (www.thechristiancommunity.org) so that it is more easily findable by search engines, since seekers (younger ones especially) often begin with the internet (the new phone book). We are developing introductory brochures and other materials that priests and congregation members alike can hand to inquirers, or leave in strategic places. This is all by way of strengthening the mother, the current congregations, so that the future child can be born strong and healthy.

And the Initiatives Group is continuing to look toward the future. We are looking forward to opportunities to visit communities and the delegates' meeting, to have a listen, to perceive what the future looks like. What could be done locally and in the whole region to strengthen mother and child? What does this child want to be? Can we imagine a child that looks somewhat different from the mother?

We would encourage you, the boards, and the general members, to send us "pictures", both literal and metaphoric. What does your signage look like? Send one of us a photo of your congregation building from across the street. How do you think The Christian Community, and your congregation, are faring? What brought you to The Christian Community? What keeps you coming? What do you think would strengthen the present, and the future? Feel free to e-mail any of us. We are looking forward to meeting you, and hearing your ideas firsthand as to how the Initiatives Group can help this child - our Christian Community - to develop.

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ORDINATION OF NORA MINASSIAN

Melissa Kay

In May, I traveled to Berlin to witness the ordination of Nora Minassian, who began her relationship with The Christian Community in our San Francisco congregation, and whose path we have



Nora Minassian (center left) at ordination

followed with deep admiration and great joy. Nora is one of four who were ordained in Berlin on May 23 and 24, Saturday and Sunday of the Ascension Season 2009. As I write, nearly three weeks later, the mood and the images of the experience remain vividly with me. I was hesitant about going without a knowledge of German, but now I wonder if it is in part because I could not be absorbed in the

words that the mood and the images made such a deep impression.

The beauty and spaciousness of the altar area, the rich red and gold colors of the Ascension vestments blending with those of the amazing painting that fills the wall behind the altar, the solemnity of voice, gesture, movement, music, the intimacy of exchange between ordainer and ordinand – all worked to evoke a profound sense of spiritual presence, of a mystery event, and the step by step process of ordination unfolded within the context of the Act of Consecration of Man. Never before have I felt so powerfully the closing words – Das war sie – “That was it”



Nora Minassian

– the withdrawal of the mystery – the exhale of a deep in-breath!

The mood of celebration and joy then spilled out into the hallways, the garden, the dining hall of the Berlin church – a Pentecost, one might say, of languages – Spanish, Korean, Armenian, German, English – all mingling in a chorus of congratulation and gratitude to and for our newly ordained priests.

One comes away with an ever deepening, widening wonder – wonder at what we are doing when we celebrate the sacraments on the Earth, wonder and gratitude for those through whose consecration that celebration can happen.

Melissa Kay is a long time member of the San Francisco congregation.

YOUTH GROUP PERFORMS IN NEW YORK

The Youth Group from the Spring Valley, NY congregation performed short plays by Thornton Wilder in the New York City congregation. Their motto: "I am not afraid of life. I will astonish it."



MICHAELMAS I

Adam Bittleston

Amid the storm of the world,
In which our souls share,
We seek the leader of the Angel-host.
Michael, who casts down the Dragon.
Into our thoughts may come through him
The sense of gentle awe,
Of patient reverence for the hidden wisdom
That is in all things.
And in our acts of courage
Will overcome the cramping fear
Which makes a slave of man.
Michael calls, when autumn darkens the earth;
He leads to Christ, and fights for Christ, for ever;
So may we follow him and fight beside him
Against the Dragon with enduring fire.

In *Meditative Prayers for Today*, available at [booktables](http://booktables.com) or Steinerbooks.com

JUMP! TO AUSTRALIA

In July, Rev. Patrick Kennedy took a group of young people to a Christian Community Youth Conference, Jump! in Australia. The following is from one of the North American participants, Julia Noak

This Australian trip was one of the best adventures I've ever gone on. Even the twenty-five hour flight was exciting, especially when we landed and I was able to say that I had gone on a full flight without getting sick.

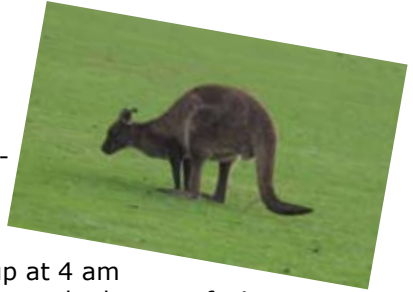
When we finally arrived in Melbourne, we were thrilled--until we found out we still had a few hours drive to go till the first hostel. That night we saw our first Kangaroo or possibly Wallaby, as we didn't know the difference at the time.

The first hostel was great; we didn't even have to cook; but getting up at 4 am was not our cup of tea after a long flight and a long confusing drive as we tried to find the hostel (driving on the left side), arriving around midnight.

The second day we had a lovely cramped ten hour drive to the ferry, where we met up with the last of our group who had sadly lost their luggage and didn't get it back till a few days before leaving Australia.

The ferry was a horrid forty-five minute long ride, where a few of us felt quite sick, while others were having a blast on the deck.

Once on Kangaroo Island (aka KI), we went to a restaurant where a few of us tried Kangaroo meat. The next day we went to the next hostel where we would be cooking for ourselves. While on KI, we went to Kelly Caves where we went caving in a dry (dead) cave (no longer growing at a measurable rate), a national park by the ocean where we saw tons of seals – sleeping, playing, stretching and walking. We saw the Twelve Apostles (twelve large rocks in the ocean) of which only eight are still standing and the Remarkable Rocks (VERY LARGE Rocks), where most everyone climbed around on.



land and Holland, all extremely nice and a large number of whom I

am still in contact with. Our days were full: breakfast, speeches, lectures, break, morning workshop (throughout the whole conference), lunch, break, afternoon tea, afternoon workshop (chosen newly every day), handwork, jewelry, cooking, body percussion, circus and world café, dinner, afternoon speeches and activities, evening services, social time till 11 or 11.30 pm, then bed.

Saying good bye on the last day was hard because more than half of the people would not be joining us in our last adventure in Australia, my personal favorite, Blaze Aid (an organization that helps rebuild farm fences after the fires in February). The evening before Blaze Aid started, a group of us went to see a footy match (an Australian sport which is very difficult to describe).

During Blaze Aid we stayed in a boxing gym/school and drove every day to the base, where we would be divided up into



sections and sent to different farms to help either pulling down old fences, building new ones, or plant new trees, sometimes walking over two or three ridges to get to where the work had to be done. The people lost fencing, animals, houses and even family members and were overwhelmed with gratitude for what we were doing, especially because we had in most cases no idea that there had been a fire and were in no way affected by it. (While we were there, a news team filmed us and you can watch us at <http://www.abc.net.au/landline/>, then click on July archive, Blaze Aid and you might discover a few of us, even singing with Patrick [appears as an interview text].

At the end of our three days at Blaze Aid came the hardest good bye and also the last one we would have to go through with others. We Americans stayed a few more nights in Melbourne, checking out the different markets, restaurants and museums. Our last night we were able to stay at a Best Western close to the airport and we ordered our first pizza in a long time. The following day we left early to catch our first plane to Sidney on to LA, then to Washington DC, going the same way we had come.

Much more took place, but to put it all in words in a piece of paper would be almost impossible without writing a book.

Thank you so much for all the donations and support which made going to Australia a reality for us!

THE ACT OF CONSECRATION AS AN ARCHETYPE OF WORK

Cynthia Hindes

Why do we work? There are several answers of course; to earn money, to survive. But basically any task we do, weed the garden, build fences, or paint a room, is done with the intention that something will be different, transformed in the world after we're done. If nothing changed, why would we bother?

Work involves a few other elements: we have to show up, at a particular place and time. (I can't weed the garden from my desk.) It helps if I'm suitably attired (I won't weed in a tuxedo). I bring suitable tools (I can't weed with a paintbrush.) And somewhere along the way someone has given me instructions on how to do it.

All work has three parts: the preparation, the actual work that changes something, and the review or cleanup. Depending on the job, the proportion of each varies. In painting a room, for instance, a large amount of the time is spent on preparation—taking down pictures, moving and draping furniture, laying down tarps, masking, spackling, sanding, priming, etc.

One of the ways to consider the Act of Consecration is as an archetype for work in general. What is the intention of the work of the Act of Consecration—how will the world be different? We offer bread and wine (prepared by previous work) along with the best of our soul forces of thought, feeling, and devoted will, so that they (both substances and souls) will be transformed into the bodily vessel and living force of Christ. And we offer our efforts to God and his angels so that the world can be transformed according to their intentions.

For the Act of Consecration we have to show up at a particular place and on time. Suitable attire includes our soul attire, our soul mood. At the door we divest ourselves of the stress of the rest of our lives, of driving and parking, and clothe ourselves in a soul mood of serious endeavor and attention. We are also aware that this is not a job done in solitude, but that we are joining a work team. This team consists not only of those in the room with us, but also of those who are true inner Christians, no matter where they are, and those who have died, who are outside of space and time and can therefore be anywhere, anytime. And we prepare to listen to Someone who will instruct us in what to do.

Then the preparations continue: candles are lit, opening the visual space, signaling us to watch. Music tunes our souls. The bell rings, calling us to attention, and further opening the listening space. Then we state our intention, to dedicate ourselves worthily to the intentions of the divine world, in consonance with Christ, in a mood of reverence and mindfulness. The epistle is a kind of letter to us from the spiritual world, helping us take note of seasonal mood and atmosphere, further tuning our souls. The gospel reading, instructions from Christ, helps us get an idea of where we are going, the aim of the



Window by Laura Summer,
Taconic Berkshire Chapel

work, especially this week. And the Creed gives us the big picture from beginning to end of earth evolution.

By analogy, if this were a painting project, up to this point we would have shown up with our tools and attire; we've heard the intention and instructions from the team leader; we're beginning to take down and drape the everyday items. And three times already we have asked that the Trinity be in us in this work.

The second part of the Act of Consecration is the Offering. There is a kind of restating and deepening of the intention—we're bringing our best inner resources because of the water stains, pock-marks and chips on our souls. Into the earthly substances of water and wine, we mix our best soul forces united with Christ, with what Christ has already given us, and offer it to the Father Ground of the World. One could say that we are offering our best to Him who holds world karma. We've begun stirring and laying on the primer.

Then the focus shifts into a kind of flow and weaving. 'Paint' is being stirred, pigments added. (Nearly half way through, and we're still prepping.) If you watch a Lazure painting team at work, you see two or three people working together across a wall at three different heights, working and blending each others' brush strokes as they lay on a progressively changing color. Now in the Act of Consecration we begin to work together in the same way, not only with earthly substances and mood, but also alchemically with air and light and warmth. Our prep work culminates in the censuring and the final prayer that brings in the creative fire of Love. The Team Leader is nearby.



from www.lazure.com

In the beginning of the third part, the Canon, the intention is further developed—may our prayers reach through Christ to the World Father, and may He bless and strengthen our work. May the substances come alive as the body and blood of the Being of Love. The nearness of Christ gives the team peace, strength, and unity of purpose. Now finally the actual work begins: the work of transforming the earthly substance. Bread and wine are elevated and united with soul substance, imitating the directions given at the Last Supper. In gratitude and in union with the Father Ground, substance and souls are offered to World Karma. Christ answers with His intention—that Godhood be returned to humanity. And then the substances are elevated again, by us, by our own act of will and in hope.

At this point we recognize that the actual transformation occurs from across the threshold of the senses, from behind the veil. The actual transformation, the real work of change, is accomplished by divine grace. And as Christ concentrates his presence at the altar, and in our hearts, we can pray with Him His prayer, the Lord's Prayer. It is

a prayer in the we-form, a prayer for the world.

Now, as we move into the fourth part, the Communion, Christ speaks directly to us. 'I stand at peace with the world! I can give you this peace...' It is amazing and reassuring that Christ is not at enmity with the world or with us, no matter what a mess we may have made of it; He can work with us, anoint us with the oil of His peace, so that we, too, can align ourselves and work with what is forward moving, evolving, in the world. Strength and healing pour into us all through this part. In humble awareness of weaknesses, we apply ourselves so that the alchemical work of transformation at the altar may serve the world.

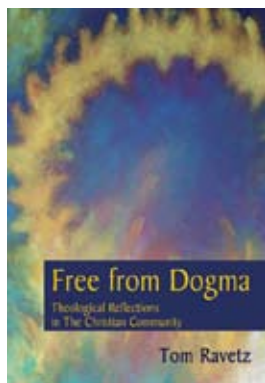
There is an important moment after Christ has offered Himself as Bread, as soul nourishment: we are inspired to make a counter-offer of ourselves. 'Take me...' We ask to be 'hired on' for further work.

After the Communion, we begin to climb down the ladders, to review the work done and clean up. We visit the elements of the beginning, the preparation, in reverse. We hear the epistle again, the 'letter' from the very beginning, now noticing the subtle changes in how it sounds, before and after. The statement that the act is over mirrors the statement of intention of worthy dedication. The music from the beginning sounds again; the candles are extinguished; in the vestry things are cleaned and put away for next time. Bread and wine may be prepared to be taken to the sick out in the world. Cleanup becomes preparation for the next work, the next time.

What lessons can we take from the Act of Consecration as an archetype of work? How can we perform our everyday tasks, using the Act of Consecration as an example?

- Clarity of intention—we can try to humbly form the intention to do work of earth, the transformation of earth, in consonance with the Trinity, commingling, with Christ, the work of earth with work of heaven.
- We can do sufficient and thorough prep work, both of self and of earthly elements.
- We can form an awareness that we do not work alone. No matter how solitary any given job may be, we can unite our intentions and actions with others, both living and dead.
- We can also form an awareness that the beings of the spiritual world have their own intentions and can work in from their side, if we invoke and align ourselves with them.
- We can recognize the importance of the mood and soul atmosphere that we bring to our work. Inattention, negative emotions, and egoism are like pouring poisonous black pigment into the paint of any task.
- We can enlarge our awareness that everything we do is work for the world.

Thus with courageous humility, with gratitude and in loyalty, day by day we keep on showing up for the task of joining work of earth with work of heaven.



FREE FROM DOGMA: THEOLOGICAL REFLECTIONS IN THE CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY

Tom Ravetz
ISBN: 9780863156908
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Floris Books
\$30.00
144 pages

From the book jacket: *The Christian Community is a religious movement inspired by Rudolf Steiner's insights into esoteric Christianity religious rites. The Christian Community differs from other churches in that it does not demand its members to follow to a particular creed or worldview. Nevertheless, spiritual, philosophical, and religious questions arise, and by thinking them through and discussing them, members contribute to the great, two-thousand-year-old spiritual conversation.*

Free from Dogma, the first book that truly explores the theology of the Christian Community, asks questions and offers insights into religious life and experience. In the first half, Rev. Tom Ravetz addresses questions about God, the Trinity, the Incarnation, and the Holy Spirit. In the second half, he outlines the human journey from oneness to multiplicity and back to oneness through community.

Rev. Tom Ravetz was born in Leeds in 1964. He completed the training for the priesthood of the Christian Community in Stuttgart and studied theology at the University of Aberdeen. He has been involved in training priests in Germany, and works in the UK and Ireland. He has written and spoken on a wide variety of theological and spiritual topics.

Unlike what one might expect from the subject matter, this is by no means a dry book. It is warm and encouraging, written for the layperson who wants to know how the dialogue between God and the human being about knowledge of both their natures is continuing.

Free from Dogma is available from Steinerbooks.com, and other online booksellers, as well as on many congregational book tables.

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Christian Community Summer Camps for Children

West Coast- contact Sabine Ehrenfeld 818 438-2669. Visit the web site at www.campmam.com

East Coast- contact Carol Kelly 845-426-3144, caroltkelly@juno.com. Visit <http://christiancommunitysv.org/contact.htm>

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