

THE CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY

MOVEMENT FOR RELIGIOUS RENEWAL

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Passion ~ Easter ~ Ascension 1997



Blessing Christ by Raphael

WHAT IS IN A NAME?

Before we are ready to celebrate Easter, the Festival of Overcoming, we are privileged to go through the four weeks of PassionTide. These are four weeks during which we do not only ponder about and live in the presence of Christ's Suffering and Death but which also point us to our own shortcomings as human beings. We realize that without Him our hearts are empty, the wakening spirit seems to be lost and a great longing pervades our whole being, and Sorrow. But not all hope is lost: we still know about our condition, are able to pull ourselves together and do something about it. We are aware: I am an "I", and this I need not to be - an end in itself - and become egotistic, it can become the radiant core of all overcoming. In this "I", I am able to grasp myself, to become aware of myself, to develop self-consciousness and to find my true name.

We carry our own names which usually do not only have a special meaning but also point to the bearer, to a spiritual being, one who calls her/himself I. In fact all human names point to that "I" which we all have in common but each one can use only for her/himself. All names point to the power of the I AM, the Christ-Child-Power in us, mysterious and holy, often taken for granted and misused - but still being the Centre.

As "I" we are and everyone is the centre of the whole world, wherever we are, we are in the centre, and thinking of the globe, we are also on top. With this we live, and maybe we feel the temptation coming with it, to become arrogant and self conceited. But we may also feel the profound loneliness which comes as challenge to be overcome.

From this vantage point we may look at a name, dear and significant to us: The Christian Community. It is full of meaning and expectation; we may feel that we need to grow into it, or that it needs to be made true, to be fulfilled through our actions. Discussions have come up about the appropriateness of the English version. We cannot assume that Rudolf Steiner when he suggested "Die Christen - gemeinschaft" as name did that out of arrogance toward other Christian groups. But we can assume that

he wanted to point out the uniqueness of that new Movement for Religious Renewal. Like any other name also this name cannot be anywhere but at the top or in the very centre of happenings, otherwise it would not be a genuine name - and this does not touch on the question whether the translation "The Christian Community" is adequate or not. Only if we lose one third of that name i.e. the "THE" in the process of coming to grips with it, we jeopardize the effectiveness to such an extent that it fades away and disappears in the backdrops of life.

Christianity as a whole is unique in itself as every Christian is, and every I-person, and thus is also in the centre and on the top for everyone who belongs. There is nothing arrogant in this, but rather a seeing and acknowledging of the fact which belongs to our humanity, that of the Centre.

What is in a Name? That it gives us the centre position wherever we are and whoever we are. This could be one of the modest fruits which we may gain from going through PassionTide.

Werner Grimm
Vancouver, B.C.

VERNER HEGG

born November, 21, 1906 died November, 30, 1996

In 1948 Verner Hegg collected a list in Europe of people in the USA who might be interested in The Christian Community's work here. After starting in New York City, in 1948 he wrote to them, including John Leverington in San Francisco, who had been confirmed in 1936 in The Hague. John began sending money to support, They met when Verner came on a visit in 1953. At the founding of the San Francisco congregation in 1956, John became a Trustee, discovering at that time that though confirmed he had not consciously taken the step to become a member, which he then did in 1957.

Verner Hegg's life was full of such stories of destiny from being on a list in 1948 in Europe, to become a trustee and member in San Francisco in 1957.

Verner Hegg was born in Scorpio in 1906 in Minneapolis, a first child. A brother followed, and two later sisters died in his childhood. He was brought up in the strict Swedish Mission Covenant Church, attending their high school and graduating at 16. He then attended Macalester College. After freshman year he worked in construction for a year with his father. He was friends with Dorothy Barackman. The next year he attended McCormick Theological Seminary in Chicago, his first move away from home. That summer he married Dorothy and they continued at the seminary, during the Great Depression working in their boarding house. Upon graduation they were sent to the Presbyterian Church in Delta, CO in his 26th year. The next year a daughter Mary Ellen was born. Two weeks later, Dorothy died. Her mother took the baby to Minneapolis to care for her - in effect removing her from Verner's life for over 30 years.

At 29, suffering under grief and doubt, he took psychology at the University of Minnesota. There was a brief marriage to an Evelyn, soon annulled. For two years he taught the new agricultural economics to farmers, averaging 3000 miles per month. Exhausted, he then studied two quarters at North Western University in Chicago. After some social work on skid row, he was cured of that kind of work.

At 32 he became a Congregational minister in Tehachepi, California. A librarian there raised the question of reincarnation - which seemed plausible. He came into contact with the Rosicrucian Order in San Jose, and also with Ernest Holmes' Religious Science of Mind in whose institute in Los Angeles he studied twice weekly that year (lots of travel). He was then offered an opening at the New Thought Temple in Cincinnati. When he visited for trial sermons he met Dorothy Schlie. After he took the position at the temple, they soon married. After deep pondering on the question: there must be something more than what this theology training offered - within a week the book, "God in My Adventure" by Rom Landau was put into his hands; Rudolf Steiner is mentioned there as a leading spiritual figure of our time. A few days later Verner and Dorothy heard Friedrich Hiebel then a Waldorf teacher at the school in New York, lecture on Anthroposophy. The talk was not

outstanding, but the person had "It" ! Studying lectures on "Community Building" they first heard of The Christian Community,

At 36 his position at the Temple was closed. He opened a little church of Religious Science in a hotel room, featuring "anthroposophical sermons" and worked for the Pennsylvania Railroad as an inspector for damaged freight. That summer he met his first Christian Community members (emigrants from Europe) at an Anthroposophical Conference in Spring Valley, NY.

At 37 he writes to England (1943) to enquire about a priest training for The Christian Community and moves to New York City taking a government job monitoring VD patients in Harlem.

At 39 and a half he is on a sponsoring committee to bring Rev. Adam Bittleston, an anthroposophical lecturer and Christian Community priest from England, to the summer Spring Valley Conference. In July 1946 he experiences the ritual communion service of The Christian Community - The Act Of Consecration Of Man - and is so deeply moved, he was dumbstruck for several hours. In the meantime he has been invited to London. In November, on a former troopship, he and Dorothy leave for England close to his 40th birthday,

Ordained on December, 7, 1947, in 1948, he began his 44 years of work, plus his 6 years of retirement. He founded or contributed to the work in New York City, Pennsylvania, San Francisco, Los Angeles, Vancouver, B.C. and Sacramento.

At 58 he divorced Dorothy and married Alstan Lippincott, the founder of Highland Hall School in Los Angeles. At 59 he again had contact with his daughter, and at 73 he baptized his great granddaughter. At 80 he visited Hawaii, at 82 he attended the 40th anniversary of the New York congregation. At 84 he retired, and at 90 he passed over the threshold. He was the first American born priest, and first brought the renewed Christian sacraments in English to the Western Hemisphere.

Richard Lewis,
Sacramento

Jennifer Mellett writes in the Austin Newsletter for February, 1997, about Verner Hegg, ‘a venerable member of the Christian Community priesthood’, who brought The Christian Community to North America. ‘We knew him and his late wife Alstan (who was a, if not the, laboring oar in founding Highland Hall Waldorf School in Los Angeles, when we lived in Sacramento, California. He supported our family spiritually during a difficult period beginning about 16 years ago when we were caring for my mother who was both mentally and physically impaired. I owe him a great debt of gratitude for his aid. Our family now has experienced most of the Sacraments of the Christian Community, except for Ordination, from many different priests, in several locations. Verner serves as the priest of the portal for us. He performed the Last Anointing and funeral service for my mother and he welcomed our daughter Amelia into the world at the hospital and through the rite of Baptism.’

PATHWAYS OF THE WORD

During his visit to California this last spring to celebrate the Sacrament of Confirmation in Los Angeles, Santa Cruz, and Sacramento, Rev. Erk Ludwig also visited the congregation in San Francisco, where, warmly welcomed by many old friends, he spoke on the theme, “Pathways of the Word.”

Following is a summary of his talk.

When we meet bilingual children, we are struck by the fact that they never mix one language with the other. That is because they intuitively experience each language as an organism, with its particular gestures, structures and forms. But if it is justified to speak of “speech organisms,” we must also ask, Who or what manifests himself or itself in these organisms?

Ancient cultures experienced their languages as originating in the beings of their highest Gods: the Indians, in Brahma; the Egyptians, in Thoth. For this reason, speech and word were held sacred.

We have lost the feeling of the holiness of the word. Profaned, the word is used for practical purposes, as sounds with which we communicate with

each other. This communication is usually connected with intentions, and we notice that once the intention is fulfilled, the word dissolves, falls away. Once a thought is understood by our listener, or once a request is carried out, *we do not repeat the words of the thought or the request.*

But there is another kind of speech. From the viewpoint of information, this speech is superfluous: as when a mother repeats a rhyme to her young child, or when parents speak an evening prayer. Such speech has nothing to do with information unless we understand in-formation as the activity of bringing a form into the being of the child. This “in-formation” has nothing to do with coming to a mutual understanding on a mental level. The understanding between mother and child is on a different soul level and takes place without words.

In describing the evolutionary stage of humanity at the time of Lemuria, Rudolf Steiner says that human speech did not even exist yet. Unlike us, the people of Lemuria lived in groups with one common consciousness, through which they understood each other without words. Nevertheless, in this wordless time, there was the beginning of speech. Wise women uttered sounds which expressed the inner rhythm, the inner life of nature. The people gathered around these wise women and listened to their song-like sounds, sounds in which they experienced higher beings, higher powers. These sounds formed and shaped their inner soul being, even down to the physical.

This beginning of speech was divine magic in the best and most positive sense. We can compare this Lemurian epoch with the early stage of childhood. When the mother speaks her “senseless,” superfluous words, the young child experiences, not the meaning, but the source of the word, that is, the soul-being of the mother herself. And through this experience, the child establishes the I-you relationship to the mother. We can grasp the forming magic of the word when we notice how the child forms, first sounds, then words, through imitating those around. It is just because the child does not yet know what the words mean that they have this magic forming power. So actually, such “superfluous” speaking reaches greater depths than intentional speaking.

Poetry belongs to this “superfluous” speaking. Unlike intentional speech, artistic speech wants to be repeated. That is because it wants to reach deeper than intellectual understanding. A poet once said, “I know a true piece of art when, through experiencing it, I become a better human being.” Art wants to do what magic words do: to build, to form the human being, to further human beings. We can even say the work of art wants to become human being, and this is why it lends itself to be repeated again and again.

Considering the gospel, is its goal to be understood? Of course the gospel wants to be understood, and we wish to understand the gospel. But if we were able to come to a complete understanding of it, would that be the intention of the gospel?

The epistle in *The Act of Consecration of Man* during the time of Advent speaks of the birth of the word. It speaks of a “future word” which is still wordless in an outer sense. But then in the course of the epistle the cosmic moment occurs when this word speaks: “Become!” Now it is born! We could say that this one word, “become,” contains the entire gospel, or that the gospel is this “become” spread out. The goal of the gospel is not only that it be understood, but that this “become” may become reality. It was fulfilled once when in the form of the spiritualized human being, the divine Being of Christ rose on Easter morning. For us, it can be fulfilled only at the end of Earth evolution. When this “become” is fulfilled, one could say, “The gospel itself has become humanity.”

The utterance of the wise women of Lemuria was the beginning not only of speech, but also of cultus, of ritual. The beginning of speech and of ritual was one and the same thing. These women and the priests knew, “When I speak, it is the God who speaks through me.” It is the human word of those ancient times through which the divine unites with the speaking one, and through which the one who is speaking unites with the divine.

Brahma is the same Being the Persians called Ahura Mazdao and whom we call Christ, the primordial Word known in different cultures by different names— the Logos who, taking on human form, unites with mankind, even with the physical human

being on Earth: the Word becomes flesh.

Once this Word spoke out of cosmic heights. Where does it speak today? Recall once more the Advent epistle: “It can be heard in the ground of the soul.” It speaks in the inner being. And what is our response to this inner speaking, to this “become”? We respond to this “become” when we seek to transform, to spiritualize, to transubstantiate all earthly being, to unite Earth existence with its divine origin again. This uniting is what we call “Resurrection.” And in this Resurrection, flesh becomes Word.

A Summary by Melissa Kay,
San Francisco

THINGS ARE MOVING IN CHICAGO

At Christmastime, around 100 people streamed into the new church of The Christian Community in Chicago. They came to see the Oberufer Christmas Play performed between scaffolding and renovation-dust by a cast and musicians ranging in age from 11 to over 50. Luckily, Robert Patterson discovered a stack of white, plastic lawn chairs which could seat the late-comers, and children were simply ushered to the bare floor in front of the room. That morning we had celebrated *The Act of Consecration of Man* for the first time in our permanent altar space. The incredible turn-out and enthusiasm for the play from neighbors, children, faithful members and friends along with the excitement about the altar renovations, brought a warmth to the church which has carried us into the new year. What a nice way to celebrate our first Christmas!

The word “permanent” is not usually a word that anyone in the Chicago congregation utters easily these days. Since we, as a family, moved here one and a half years ago, we have lived in four houses and have seen the altar in four different places. Our youngest son would get confused when we told him we were going to church (which one?). Within a year before we came, the congregation had said farewell to their

longtime priest, Rosemary Bergmann. Gregg Brewer had also retired and other more temporary priests had come through. This was the time that Philip Very stepped out of the congregation. Some people who had been important pillars of the community left or moved away. It was clearly a time of change and introspection.

The midwest is a place where people persevere, however. The apartment building, which had been the home of the church and many members, was sold to another church group. We squeezed into the living room of the parish house and waited. The following months were difficult as we tried to find the essence of our impulses and priorities. Everything seemed pared down and exposed and we yearned for a place where we could expand our work. When a free-standing church came up for sale in a safer neighborhood in Chicago, we were ready. In seven days we had a binding contract and were soon the proud owners of a new old-church with a seating capacity of 170 people. We are all still in a slight state of shock and gratefulness!

With key in hand, the question was “Now What?”. The inside of the church was an absolute mess from previous renovations. We cleared away a corner of the upstairs room and simply began what we were here to do...celebrate the Sacraments. On Michaelmas day we had our first Sunday in the new location including a Michaelmas festival. Piles of debris surrounded our improvised Michael’s scale (spare piping and baskets) but spirits were high. Several people in the room had birthdays on that day and we sang a birthday song over and over again. It was a fresh beginning and we had learned something about the fruits of patience.

We are at the beginning of a long and difficult renovation project. We do not have the money it takes to buy and renovate a big, old church and support a priest. We have taken a leap of faith that our work will generate interest and enthusiasm. Through a great real-estate deal we were able to dismantle the old parish house including hardwood floors, heating system and light bulbs before the new owners tore it down. This was a big help financially. There is probably no photo of Robert Patterson and Oliver prying

old heating elements from the walls, but we have seen that they don’t shy away from getting their hands dirty.

A steady group of faithful hands have gradually turned our turn-of-the-century church into a wonderful functional space. Our hope is that we can steadily make the space more welcoming and conducive to an atmosphere of reverence which is difficult to attain in a busy city. Our chopped-off bell please keep an eye out for one! Our downstairs has a large spare for community gatherings and smaller rooms for religious instruction, child care and a library/office. How this space could enhance the cultural life of the neighborhood is still an open question. Along with our new church have come many hopes and dreams that have not yet met with life’s realities. But one lesson we have learned is not to be afraid to form a vision that is greater than what we are in the present. Life has shown us that sometimes you get what you ask for!

Suzanne Steinrueck, Chicago (for info see camp alert address and phone)

CAMP ALERT

With summer around the corner please keep the North American Christian Community Camp in mind. This movement of over 25 years has touched the lives of hundreds of children and young people. Campers, counselors, lifeguards, kitchen staff, nurses and organizers have experienced what it means to create a close-knit community. For some, it is their only opportunity to take part in Sacramental life on a regular basis.

There will be a new Christian Community Camp outside the Chicago area this summer. We will rent a boy scout camp in the beautiful Kettle Moraine State Park in Wisconsin. This will make it convenient for children in Chicago, Wisconsin and Minnesota to attend. Camp will take place from August 14th to 28th. For further information on any of The Christian Community Camps in North America or Europe feel free to contact us in Chicago. Perhaps you know a young person who would benefit from this experi-

ence.

The "Camp Movement" is our movement and can only flourish with the interest and support of members and friends.

Suzanne and Oliver Steinrueck
2168 W. Windsor Ave.
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(773) 989-8558

SUMMER CAMPS AND BACKPACKING TRIPS PLANNED FOR 1997

CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY SUMMER CAMP at Camp Tamarack in the High Sierra of CALIFORNIA will again take place in the summer of 1997, from Wednesday June 4th through Saturday June 21, Dale Robinson directing and Everett Moraine as resident priest. Brochures are available at Christian Community centers, as well as directly from Dale Robinson, 1962 Asilomar Drive, Oakland, CA 94611, Phone (510) 339-2769. You could ask your Waldorf School for the brochure, too.

The HIGH SIERRA BACKPACKING TRIP for teenagers will follow Camp Tamarack summer camp! For information call Rev. Everett Moraine, (916) 366-9545, or write: The Sacramento Christian Community, 3506 Eisenhower Drive, Sacramento, CA 95826.

For information on a possible **HEIMDAHL CAMP IN ONTARIO** and on **ANOTHER CANOE TRIP** which is being considered for July: call Rev. Peter Skaller in Toronto, (905) 508-1431 .

CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY SUMMER CAMP to be held on the East coast from August 8th to the 23rd. For more information please contact Rev. Gisela Wielki at 309 West 74th Street, New York, NY 10023 (212) 877-3577 or 362-7204

The International Whitsun Conference entitled **INICIO, BREAKTHROUGH, AUFBRUCH** will be held in the Congress Center, Hamburg Germany, from 16th to 20th of May 1997. For more information please contact your local priest.

1997 CONFIRMATIONS

April 6 Denver, Vancouver
April 12 Santa Rosa
April 13 Boston, Sacramento
April 20 Austin, Chicago, Los Angeles, New York
May 4 Philadelphia, Toronto

Two Death and Dying Brochures written out of the perspective of The Christian Community and the booklet on the Prepare the Way conference are still available.

PREPARE THE WAY

to be obtained locally from the San Francisco congregation

ON DYING AND DEATH

(a) Perspective
(b) Prayers and Verses
to be obtained locally or from the Denver Christian Community

Please send contributions (preferably typed) to Dale Brunsvold, 2740 South Ogden, Englewood, CO 80110-1744. Or send via e-mail to dbrunsvold@aol.com. The deadline for the Michealmas 1997 is August 20th.

THE CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY IN NORTH AMERICA, AS OF FEBRUARY, 1997

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