

THE CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY

MOVEMENT FOR RELIGIOUS RENEWAL

North American Newsletter • Volume 2, Number 2

Michaelmas 1994



Michael, the Spirit of Truth

That He had come
to bear witness to truth
Pontius Pilate could not understand,
and likewise many of his
and our contemporaries;
except John
who time and again
appeals to the truth,
having experienced it
when passing the valleys of death.
“What is Truth?”
so many are asking to-day,
still echoing the Roman governor
of two millenia ago.
We are not sure
whether truth is expressed
in mathematical laws,
in man-made rules,
in something which is chiseled in rock
not to be changed for the ages
or has just a relative function
without any steady foundation.
But our age offers the answers:
long forgotten they were
but newly conceived for to-day.
Michael, Prince of the Truth
asks with his name
the answering question:
“Who is like God?”
How is God?
Creative - Creator?

But not as One by Himself
because the Oneness closes Him off from the world.
Only as Three He opens Himself:
Fatherground, Son-creator and Spirit-fulfiller.
That we are His images like this
in our threefold thinking, feeling and willing,
that we can become creative like Him,
opening up to a tri-une world,
that is Michael’s Truth,
the basic truth of to-day.
This now can be grasped
consciously through him,
and can be applied,
can be read from this world and its creatures,
can be experienced in its many forms,
even where we thought
a Two or a Four seemed to be right.
But Michael leads us,
from what is right and static
to the dynamic side of this world;
and that is where we find Truth.
Even that truth,
which to reveal is Michael’s task,
that in reality
MAN cannot be found
in this world of our senses,
even that truth shows its dynamics
in making MAN
more invisible after death than before in his life.
Thus as humans we are Witnesses of Truth
a truth not just right and close to death
but alive and dynamic in nature.

Werner Grimm

FROM THE LENKER

Ground for New Beginnings

Across North America more and more people are coming together in communities and asking that a priest be sent to serve them with the sacraments of The Christian Community. As a priest circle, we welcome these requests and want to help, but there are no new priests to assign. Perhaps among this (past) summer's blessings are seeds that have been sown in human hearts and grow into the resolve to serve Christ at His altar. We pray that the spring-time of the soul will reveal the growth of these seeds that they may be seen and be cultivated.

Robert Patterson

Follow the Lamb

(for Philip)

We have followed him, the Lamb,
from his star-bright night of birth
across the plains of Palestine
to Golgotha: and down,
down into Saturn's night of death.
Here at the edge of darkness do we stand,
halt before the grave. (Whose heart
does not halt here?) — Yet,
see how the Lamb is laid within the tomb,
see how they wind him, white, in linen bands:
gaze upon his silent fallen form,
gaze: do not flee the face of death.
Let sorrow soften.
The Lamb but sweetly waits
until our shadowed inward eyes,
grown quiet,
gently waken, bathed
in Resurrection's radiant dawn.
See how the way of Love leads on!

Melissa Kay

© The Liturgical Conference, 1994

WORKSHOP

Death as a Threshold of Life

On Holy Saturday, April 2, 1994, Nancy Poer and Lee Sturgeon-Day, with the support of the three priests of the Sacramento Christian Community, led and facilitated a workshop on the theme of Death as a Threshold of Life. About fifty people participated.

The workshop began with The Act of Consecration of Man. Coffee, tea and snacks followed, and then we gathered in a large circle, and each told our name and the name or names of loved ones who died and of whom we were thinking. Our circle was enlarged with the acknowledgment of all of these people.

Nancy Poer then led us in a conversation together. She brought up the greatly increased contemporary interest in death, the threshold, near death experiences, and life after death; that everyone has his own time clock. People who die, even of a sudden unexpected cause, often know on some level, and prepare for their death. She referred to Elizabeth Kübler-Ross and her pioneering work on death and dying. Interspersed with all Nancy brought were examples from participants in the circle, enriching the picture.

Just before lunch, many of us brought themes and questions we hoped might be addressed in the afternoon. And Paula Moraine taught us two songs, both rounds, the first a grace, the second a song for and about the dead, "The Friends Gone Before."

After our picnic lunch in the warm sunshine, we met again in our large circle. Lee Sturgeon-Day began our afternoon session raising the question of the double (our untransformed side), saying that the double departs during the three days before death. How helpful it could be to caregivers to be aware of this fact. The support of each other is the greatest gathering of resources we have. And prayer is a real support.

We then broke into three groups. Everett Moraine's group was to deal with the journey the soul takes after death. Lee Sturgeon-Day's group was to deal with burning questions, un-dealt-with griefs, or

anything else living in the hearts of the participants, and Nancy Poer's group to deal with practical details about home death.

We returned to the large circle for the closing gathering, and a number of concepts and pictures were brought. Nancy Poer talked of the reality of grief at the death of a loved one, and that a spiritual view of death can facilitate healing of the grieving process. The death of a child brings a direct link to the spiritual world, allowing forces of devotion to come to those on earth. We stay connected with our loved ones who have died through love; love knows no threshold! When we remember where we and our dead friend took joy in something together, it is like a window for them, and they can "see through" onto our plane. The social life of the future depends on our relationship with those who have died. Gratitude - for having know them, for life, children, the earth, the birds' singing - opens the soul to aid the dead and receive their light in our lives. We can read for them, reading consciously, accenting the verbs if we can, reading them something with spiritual content. We can start now to read for someone who died ten or fifteen years ago, it is not too late.

It was also suggested that each one of us make a list of all of our dead.

We closed this part of our work by doing Hallelujah in eurythmy, all of us standing in our large circle, including those on the other side of the threshold as we did so.

We then moved to the chapel for a brief service, led by Everett Moraine, and again sang the round "The Friends Gone Before." Because of the content of our day, this service seemed particularly rich, and the round came together as if by magic with no pre-arranging of groups.

When a group of people meet together to work with threshold questions, to try to understand how we can help the dead and how they can help us, everyone in the group can experience a richness of sharing, a sense of peace and of being blessed: true community of the living and the dead. This was certainly a reality in the workshop. Our thanks to Nancy, Lee, our priests, The Christian Community, and to all of the participants!

Nancy McMahon

Hymn to My Son

Philip Wood, April 27, 1970 - April 28, 1993

Perhaps dark, rough people need Angels of Light —
to soften them, untangle their hair, bring calm to their hands.
But we were already light, and bright, pressed and correct.
We needed — if to break open our courteous hearts —
an Unwashed Angel — uncombed and unshaven — grace
streaming from the cry of electric strings,
reaching out, shaking us in the night
from our too moderate dreams,
as he, single-eyed, lifting into his heart
park dwellers, streets saints, the hermits of the hotels,
cried out, "See! See! These are my friends!"
until we cracked open our eyes and, holding his sooted hands,
followed him, weeping, into the Sorrow of God.

Melissa Kay

ECUMENICAL EVENT IN DETROIT

On Sunday, January 23, 1994, at the end of the nationally observed "Week of Prayer for Christian Unity" people in Ferndale where our church is located visited from church to church in order to practice one way of unity among Christians. It meant that each of nine participating churches sent some of their own people out and received some others in their midst. It was a double challenge: for the congregation to receive the guests well and for the guests to represent their own churches well.

Our congregation (by lot) sent three members to a Lutheran church. There they were invited to do some of the scripture readings and found their names printed in the bulletin. Since our service does not provide space for lay readers, our guests from the Episcopal church provided piano accompaniment for our hymns and prelude and postlude to our service. It was very tastefully done with guitar, violin and piano. It did enliven the devotional mood. I welcomed our guests in my address and pointed to what we continuously pray: that Christ may grant unity to all who look towards Him. How do we look at Him? After the service our guests stayed for refreshments. One of the musicians recognized a friend of old in our congregation whom she had not seen for 15 years! Something like that also happened to our representatives at the Lutheran church.

All together it felt good to break out of the isolation into which we all too easily maneuver ourselves.

Hartmut Junge

ON SATURDAYS IN ELKHORN, WISCONSIN

We, the Wisconsin members of The Christian Community, are an affiliate congregation of Chicago. Nonetheless, we are incorporated in Wisconsin and have our own Trustees. We live principally in the Milwaukee, Madison or East Troy area and try to keep to an every three week schedule for our services.

The services are held in our chapel - a relocated

post-WW II pre-fab unit, sited in East Troy - on the Zinniker farm - the oldest biodynamic dairy farm in the US, dating back to 1942.

A typical Saturday, a day chosen to fit in with the rhythm of the farmers, consists of:

9:30 AM	children's religious instruction
10:00 AM	singing for children
10:15 AM	children's service
11:00 AM	The Act of Consecration of Man
12:15 PM	pot-luck lunch at Ruth and Richard Zinniker's
1:30 PM	study/discussion group with the priest

Attendance at the adult service is usually 15-20 and 6-10 at the study/discussion and has been growing. Participation in last year's discussions on community needs and responsibilities was widespread and lively.

Our greatest joy is serving the growth in the number of children coming for religious instruction. Parents, with children in either of the two Waldorf Schools in the area, are increasingly interested in bringing their children. We have twenty or more children who come. In April we divided the instruction into three groups: grades 1/2 and grades 3/4 are taught by lay members; and grades 5 and up are taught by a priest - now, usually, Rev. Robert Patterson.

Currently, we are addressing our responsibilities for partial support of a priest in Chicago; for providing appropriate responses to our healthy "growing pains" that come with increased attendance and interest; and for a future that aspires to a full-time resident priest and congregation status.

Your in Christ,
for the members:

Dennis J. Pawlak

A Report on the Seminar-Retreat in New York City

On June 9-12, a seminar-retreat was held in New York City. Its theme was “Human Tasks in the Light of the Whitsun Mystery” and its purpose was to enliven our awareness of the working of Christ in the world, in ourselves and in the renewed sacraments of the Christian Community. Additionally it was intended as an opportunity to explore the vocation of the priesthood.

Twenty-one participants joined together with three priests, Sanford Miller from Boston, Robert Patterson from Chicago, and Gisela Wielki from New York City. Participants came from as far away as Maine, Wisconsin, Toronto, and San Diego, as well as Massachusetts, upstate New York and the New York City area. Some of the participants had also originally come from such places as Russia, Columbia, England and the Philippines, which gave the gathering a very international flavor.

We began each morning with The Act of Consecration of Man, followed by a morning course, and after lunch there were artistic activities, and more thematic discussion. In the evening after a tasty supper provided by members of the local community, there was an open group conversation, ending with a close of day Gospel reading from the letters to Timothy.

We looked a bit at church history and the founding of The Christian Community in that context. The two Gospel readings for this time of the year, the stories of Nicodemus coming to Christ at night, and the Samaritan woman at the well, were closely examined. We tried to find the more hidden meanings not only behind the pictures, but also in the structure. After one person read the whole text aloud, we examined it line by line. What time of day did this conversation take place? Where? What was the character of the statements and responses? Nicodemus comes as one of the Jewish elders, and begins by saying, “We know that you are a teacher come from God...” Then Christ teaches him about the incarnation of the Light. We compared this to the scene with

the Samaritan woman by the well at midday, which starts from her experience of being an outsider, and having to ask questions because she does not “know.” Then there is a conversation about water which takes place on two levels at once, and leads to a final recognition of Him as the Messiah. And who were those five husbands really?

We explored the themes of the three tasks of the priest, the celebrating of the sacraments (a modernized form of the mysteries), the enthusiastic proclaiming of the word, and the enlightened care of souls. We looked at highlights of the character of each sacrament and their connection to the stages in human life. We also examined the theme of being called and being sent, looking at where the word “sends” appears in John’s gospel, in the description of the Whitsun event and of St. John the Baptist. We also looked at three “Whitsun biographies” — Albert Schweitzer, Thomas Dooley and Dag Hammarskjold.

The artistic activities involved concentrated forays into speech formation and form drawing, and the preparation of a hymn based on Psalm 17 which the conference participants sang at the beginning and end of the service on Sunday.

There were also opportunities for private conversations, both with priests and with other participants. The practical aspects of going to the seminary, the course of study there, costs, etc. were also dealt with. There was even time for taking in a little of the life of the city, the nearby Natural History Museum and a street fair.

That’s a little about the outer side of what we did, which was certainly exciting, stimulating and challenging. But to really describe what happened we need to look at some of what went on at other levels.

Private conversation and our lunch hour at various restaurants (at least in the group I was with) involved intense discussion on such themes as the nature of the feminine, and life in community. But equally important was that the retreat leaders encouraged us to bring those questions, our concerns, even our dissatisfactions regarding spiritual life and the life of the community into the group discussions in the evening. Many points of view were brought for

ward. Quick-fix answers were avoided. There was the courage to live with a question, perhaps an uncomfortable one, and not to look for an immediate answer. What really lived in people was brought out, acknowledged. Somehow through the group effort these burdens were en-lightened and something, some process could be quickened and begin to grow. In fact, the seminar-retreat, held at the end of Whitsuntide, itself became a kind of Whitsun event. An inner process began through being together, which in a natural progression has carried itself into resolves for the future: for some to look more at the Gospels, for others to more consciously deepen their connection to Christ; for some perhaps to explore the possibility of the priesthood. For many this long weekend became in some measure a nodal point in destiny.

For me the retreat was very inspiring. On one level it meant taking time out of my life to go to a different place, to immerse myself consciously in a content somewhat different from "everyday" life. But ironically, the retreat was more than just an experience of going away to something different. In exploring the gospels, in meeting and getting to know better both people new to me and old friends, in experiencing the blessing of The Act of Consecration of Man every day, and a gospel reading every night, this "retreat" didn't feel like a withdrawal from life but rather a quickening, an intensification, of life as it wants to be, of life as it really is. It felt like coming home.

Cindy Hindes

"ATTEMPTO"

International Whitsun Youth Conference

We walked into the distinctly angled Waldorf school and explained, in broken German, that we were American latecomers to the long awaited international youth conference sponsored by The Christian Community. After taking off from Newark, New Jersey six hours late, a friend and I had finally arrived in

Tübingen, Germany, half way through the official welcoming speech. The conference was to last five days, from May 20th to the 24th. In that time we were going to ponder, discuss, perform and **live** the theme "Attempto" - **Daring to Become Human**.

As I sat listening to the next morning's lecture get translated into Spanish, French, Russian and English it struck me how many different languages, cultures and identities were represented in that big gymnasium; and yet how universal and essential this theme of daring to become human really was. After the lecture we broke into discussion and artistic workshops. I joined the eurythmy group, which was a very refreshing as well as challenging experience. We worked with expansion and contraction, with floating, wave-like movements, contrasting them with harder, seemingly more conscious movements. I found these latter forms most interesting, for they required more awareness and concentration, similar in ways to my inner struggling to become more conscious, more fully human.

Like the morning lecture, the afternoon plenum reminded me, by the many languages, of the varied cultures and far distances we called our homes, yet I could understand and identify with the different ideas and questions we raised to each other. The evening performances, put on by groups from different countries as well as organizers and others, were excellent. Among the many presentations, several come to mind: the South African "Talk Show" portrayed the many sides of the old apartheid and the country's huge transition; Miha Pogacnik made a surprise appearance with his violin, promoting the youth peace initiative to the former Yugoslavia, and two students at a school of Mime gave a funny and touching performance.

All told we were over a thousand in number, from all over the world, speaking 27 different languages and living very different lives in our own individual cultures. Yet for these five days we were just young people there together, talking, thinking and laughing, doing eurythmy or even having a cigarette together. All together close to 40 different interest groups were offered. The theme of daring to become human could touch us all, whether in Tübingen,

Johannesburg, St. Petersburg, or New York. It touched me not be attempting to answer a question, but by moving me to ask questions of myself.

Nathaniel Holder (19)
Spring Valley, NY

COMING EVENTS AND ACTIVITIES OF THE CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY

Christianity and the Reality of the World, a Michaelmas Conference to be held October 8-10, 1994 in New York City. For more information call (212) 874-5395 or (212) 877-3577.

SACRAMENTO CONFERENCE

Conference at The Christian Community in Sacramento, CA. Sacramental Christianity - Medicine For Our Soul with Rev. Taco Bay, Rev. Ita Bay, Rev. Erk Ludwig, Rev. Everett Moraine and Rev. Phillip Nusbaum. November 4-6, 1994, Friday, 8:00 PM through Sunday at 2:00 PM.

Lecture by Taco Bay, Services, Other Lectures and Artistic Activity. Detailed information available in your congregation, or phone the Sacramento congregation, (916) 362-4330.

ALL-AMERICAS CONFERENCE

The Christian Community in North and South America will hold a conference from July 12-16 at Kimberton, Pennsylvania. **Please already make a note of time and place; further information will be available through the congregations.**

BOOK REVIEW

The Healing Power of Prayer

"Do you practice healing in your church?", we are sometimes asked. My answer is: We do - we pray together in the communion service, we pray individually. We do not, though, lay hands or speak emphatically to individual people, that their maladies and sickness be healed. Healings resulting from this, however beneficial to the person concerned for the moment, might heal only the physical symptoms. Healing has to begin in the soul, and this is why from early on communion was called "healing medicine", *pharmakon athanasias*, that is: "medicine for immortality."

The Australian Christian Community has published its first booklet, "The Healing Power of Prayer" by Hans-Werner Schroeder, translated by Hilde Stossel. In 22 small chapters, Schroeder looks at prayer in quite a practical manner, beginning with the need people feel to find a way for the soul to become more harmonious and inward-looking. With his readers he searches for the way prayer can again become part of daily life, looking especially at the Lord's Prayer.

The booklet offers many suggestions, also for particular prayers as those For The Dead, For the Sick, For Children, Graces and Prayers In the Event of Need.

Schroeder's thoughts will be especially fruitful if used in conjunction with the Prayers and Graces, collected by Michael Jones, and Adam Bittleston's Meditative Prayers for Today, both containing many prayers grown out of the spirit of the English language.

The booklet has been published as part of ongoing fund-raising efforts and is to be followed by more publications. Its price may vary locally, but could be around \$4.00; available in your congregation.

Arie Boogert

Please send contributions to: Dale Brunsvold, 2740 S. Ogden, Englewood, CO 80110-1744.