

THE CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY

MOVEMENT FOR RELIGIOUS RENEWAL

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St. George and the Dragon by Düter

MICHAELMAS: THE SECOND SPRING

Ordinarily we think of autumn as the time of death in nature. But in the more southerly parts of the temperate zone we can observe another interesting aspect of autumn. Interwoven with the decline of autumn is its opposite, a second springtime.

In autumn in the south, the plant world revives after the killing heat of summer. For a while, Nature seems to breathe a sigh of relief. The lawns turn green again. The roses display a second flush of blossoming. Fall flowers emerge. This interweaving of a second spring can be evident in subtle form even in the north.

There is a Russian legend which points to this interweaving of autumn and spring, between Michaelmas and Easter. In this legend, the Archangel Michael watches helplessly at the crucifixion as God's son is being murdered by the very world he created. In the intensity of his love for Christ, Michael wants to destroy the world in order to put an end to Christ's suffering. It is only Christ's command that saves the world from being destroyed by Michael.

However, Michael's fighting spirit finds its outlet a little later. After death, Christ descends into hell. There, with the weapons of his light and strength, he battles the forces of darkness to free the souls of the dead who had lost their divine nature. In this battle we can imagine Michael at Christ's side. We can imagine how the light of Michael's love for Christ helps bring new life out of the realm of death. We can imagine Michael at Christ's side as He leads souls out of the maw of the monster Death.

What happened in world history is mirrored in the gestures of Nature in the course of the year. Renewed life is called forth out of the dying year as a delicate second spring in autumn. This second spring is the gesture of Michael, pointing across the year to Christ's deed of life in the spring.

This second spring is also evident in individual human lives. The natural course of our life also arrives at an autumn. Amid life's smaller deaths and losses, not the least of which is the loss of our youth,

we may be able to find a second spring in new friends, new relationships, in a new direction, in new meanings.

On an even more subtle and intimate level, there is also the emerging of new life out of death in the arena of the human soul. All throughout our lives, each of us fights to save the life of our own higher or true self from chains of earthly slavery. We struggle to remember why we are here, whom we were meant to meet, and what we wanted to accomplish together. We struggle to overcome the deadly monster of our own selfishness. We struggle to recognize the shining true self within our fellow human beings.

In these struggles we use the light of our trust in Christ, the light of our hope in the outcome, the light of our love for him. With these weapons of light we fight against the dragon's chains that would bind us to the merely earthly. With Christ's light in our souls we can overcome the death forces that hold sway in matter.

Michael, who is free of the weight of earthly matter, joins his forces to ours in our struggles. He points across the year towards Christ's overcoming of death and His renewal of life. For he wants us to recognize that Christ is the new birth in death. Michael, working together with Christ, is the second spring, the rebirth in our autumn.

Cynthia Hindes
Los Angeles

BREAKING GROUND FOR THE NEW CHAPEL IN CHESTNUT RIDGE / SPRING VALLEY

Four years of preparation culminated this past May 21 in a groundbreaking ceremony for the new Christian Community Center in Spring Valley on land of its own, adjoining that of the Threefold Educational Foundation. As if nature meant to demonstrate from the outset that commitment to religious renewal must not depend on clement circumstances, the days leading up to the opening ceremony were marked by

violent, rainy storms, rendering our groundbreaking more of a mudsliding. This held particular appeal for the participating children, who, led by a determined first grader, gleefully turned the first spadeful of sopping earth to signify the commencement of construction.

We were gathered on the grassy side of the large expanse cleared to await the next stages, its huge trees felled and stacked nearby, the whole area encircled by forest and permeated by the fragrance of fresh wood chips. An enormous, though dormant, steam shovel provided a backdrop for a brass fanfare composed and conducted by Felicia Knowles and performed by the teenagers' quintet assembled for the occasion by trumpeter Kevin Bryan: We listened to an astonishing series of climbing ornaments crowned by a sliding, swooping flourish, suggesting the energy and enthusiasm of the dynamic, wakeful encounter between human and celestial powers that this endeavor aims to house.

In her welcoming words, Rev. Gisela Wielki assured us that the disruption of nature, visible in the shocked, exposed roots of unearthed trees, would receive compensation from the human activity that will transform the landscape into a home for spirit to radiate both into the surrounding nature and human culture. Our multi-generational crowd, including one poodle, heartily thanked Michael Scharff for having gotten us this far' and received his promise that the first beams would be in place within six months to replace the previous structure. This was a long-neglected and finally abandoned house which, like many traditional institutions built to frame the outlook of an earlier era, was, in Rev. Wielki's description, "collapsing in on itself". In olden times, she added, the first project of monks who cleared forest land was to build a house of worship, which perhaps then grew into a church, even a cathedral. In Spring Valley the sequence is reversed: A chapel arises amid communities that for the better part of the past century have already been "cultivating the landscape of the soul" - Green Meadow Waldorf School, the Fellowship Community, Sunbridge College, the School of Eurythmy, the Speech School and the biodynamic and therapeutic work.

We heard Christa Macbeth's lucid recitation of poetry by Mary Oliver, testifying to the accessible 'spiritual honey' that blossoms in May, and by Wendell Berry, celebrating trees as 'light come down to earth', and together we sang 'Mozart's Alleluia' round in praise of the Creator. Our song began, as deeds of every congregation begin, around a uniting focal point, and like the activity that we envision emanating from the chapel to come, poured out joyfully in cascading echoes embraced by woodlands and sheltered by clouds. Creation being a work-in-progress, it seemed apt that, arriving among individuals, this unrehearsed offering concluded, accidentally yet ever-so-appropriately, where it had begun: with 'Ah!'

Perhaps to avoid leaving a collective trail of mud, we were then bidden to make our ways independently to Threefold Auditorium for a chamber music concert to benefit the building of the chapel. The featured artists were recent Green Meadow Waldorf School graduates Eric Shurtleff, cello, and Emmanuel Vukovich, violin, who has been a student at Julliard, both accompanied by Gili Melamed-Lev, piano, herself a Julliard graduate and lately Eurythmy Spring Valley's Artist-in-Residence, who traveled from Harlemville for the performance. Quite apart from the virtuosic, consistently sensitive executions of a technically demanding program (including the restless, searching tone-poem 'Parzival', composed through a collaboration of the string performers; the Chaconne from Bach's Partita No. 2; selections from Bach's Cello Suite No. 5; and Sarasate's Zigeunerweisen), several noteworthy qualities marked the afternoon. Our pianist, etching a communal path with her colleagues through the selections, restored a deep, archetypal meaning to 'accompanying', and the atmosphere of the auditorium was tuned by the visible quality of the performers' "active listening". But perhaps most remarkable was that the harmony thus generated extended to the many quite young members of the audience, who on other occasions in the same setting have not always exhibited the same level of appreciative attention. In the aisle seat of a row close to the stage, one small girl could be observed encountering the Sarasate with

such enthusiasm as to seem herself transformed into a responsive musical instrument. But for all her animation, invoking the service of head and limbs alike, she remained utterly silent throughout. Such discretion revealed the subtly transformative power of progressively awakening worship - a power that the activities of the afternoon nourished in time, and which the coming chapel will arise to contain spatially.

Michael Ronall
New York

VANCOUVER - OR THE FAR WEST OF THE CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY

Looking at the western coastline of the Americas, we see a north west - south east gradient: Alaska is much more to the west than California. Thus Vancouver, with its affiliate congregation Duncan on Vancouver Island, is the most western congregation of The Christian Community. From here The Act of Consecration is handed over to our western neighbor Japan in the east, where after New Zealand and Australia the first service of the day is celebrated.

This global aspect of The Act of Consecration as a part of community consciousness is somewhat nearer here than in Central Europe, where I worked for 28 years before coming to North America last year.

During the ancient Greek period the West was considered to be the place where the dead, the shadows, go, and the most western islands that were known at that time, the Canary Islands in the Atlantic Ocean, were called the islands of the dead. So this would apply even more to us. In spite of this, we feel rather alive around here, in the region of the northwestern rain forest, with, in part, about 9 feet precipitation per year - where the next generation of trees is growing on a nursing log which has fallen down.

It is the land of the trees, with the mountains

right at the ocean: 30 minutes by car to the skiing areas, 30 minutes to the beaches. Fortunately for The Christian Community, no skiing and swimming is possible at the same time. There is an untamed beautiful wilderness around us. Last year 24 bears were shot in the city of North Vancouver, and in Victoria a cougar hid in the underground car park of a hotel.

Verner Hegg founded this congregation in 1971, Werner Grimm has carried the work for the last 29 years and in 1999 I came from Stuttgart. Our church is in Burnaby, a municipality of greater Vancouver. The larger part of the congregation lives in North Vancouver where the Waldorf School is, but the church is somewhat in the middle of the lower mainland. Some members, however, live in Duncan, in Seattle, in the Okanagan, in Edmonton. We hope that one of these days there will be an affiliate congregation in Seattle.

Vancouver is full of new immigrants, a large part of them from Asia, which unfortunately is not reflected in our membership yet. West and East are meeting here directly, without anything in between.

All of this creates a somewhat unique situation for our congregation, which is a great challenge and a great chance for the future.

Michael Kientzler
Vancouver

FOUNDATION IN JAPAN

This Whitsunday, June 11, 2000, The Christian Community has been founded in Japan. For this foundation, people from five cities came together in a holiday center near Tokyo, well known from a 1997 Christmas conference. From now on, The Christian Community is present in all five continents, having grown from Europe to North America and subsequently to South America, to (South) Africa, Australia and New Zealand, and now to Asia.

Naoki Kobayashi, our first Japanese born priest, after his ordination in 1985 has worked in Germany, at the same time preparing for this foundation, which

became possible with the ordination of two other Japanese priests, Shozo Koshiishi and Urara Koshiishi, in 1999.

BUILDING A CHURCH IN CALI?

Once more I have visited our budding congregation in Cali, Colombia, an 'affiliate' congregation without its own resident priest, this year from May 9th through 15th. It is amazing what has happened there since my first visit in 1984. In 1987 a second visit was made by Reingard Knausenberger, priest in South Africa but born in New York and at that time working in Germany. Since 1991 Pablo Corman and also Emilia Hosmann have visited regularly from Lima, Peru, where our congregation in the meantime had become a congregation in its own right.

Visiting now, you experience: this congregation does exist, there are carrying members, and the seven young people receiving Confirmation have been prepared well. Thirty children come to their Sunday Service and forty adults to the Act of Consecration. Lectures held by me in a rented space in the upper parts of a shopping center, all three days were visited by eighty people.

What the media let us know about Colombia is not less true, for all that. More than half the country in fact is being controlled by subversive movements; in the various urban conglomerates they infiltrate in an alarming way, mostly through domestic help for the moneyed class. And when you ask people: "How are you able to endure this situation, this continuous strain and visible violence", they answer: "By praying." This is an impressive fact, which should be written up and researched more. But there is no doubt about its truth, and personally I clearly experience people in Cali as far more tranquil than for instance in Buenos Aires.

Our Christian Community services in Cali enjoy the hospitality of the Waldorf School in its astonishingly beautiful eurythmy room. This does not create a bad dependent situation, as this school is thus 'robust' that it also offers its hospitality to Roman-

Catholic First Communion celebrations and to regular meetings of a group of 'Eastern' thinking people.

Our relationship with the Anthroposophical Group, which only was founded after The Christian Community had begun its work, is so brotherly that both groups have decided to combine their forces. On a property which has already been donated we will build 'together but separately', The Christian Community using 70% of the available area and the Anthroposophical Group 30%. The bunker-like underground garage, necessary because of city ordinances and the danger of earthquakes, will be used by both. We hope rather soon to start the first building phase, which will consist of the total 'structure': all fundamentals, underground garage, floors and corresponding uprights and columns for the whole building, which in part will have three to four floors. A community room and a small house for a priest are part of this first phase, so that everything will be ready to receive a resident priest. When this will have come about, the congregation hopes gradually to be able to finish the whole building, depending on circumstances and feasibility.

Building this first phase, including the price of the property and so on, will cost approximately US \$225,000 of which only \$75,000 are yet lacking. We hope to receive this amount as 'aid from abroad', as at the moment we cannot expect to receive more from Cali itself. Actually, it is quite astonishing what our Cali people have raised and contributed themselves - a clear indication of their strong will.

To me it is amazing that this will to build has come into being in such an extremely precarious and oppressive general situation. Exactly the same happened in Lima, now more than ten years ago, at the height of the power of the guerilla movement 'Shining Path', and in Buenos Aires now almost twenty years ago during the military dictatorship and the Falkland War.

Martin de Gans, Buenos Aires
Lenker for South America

CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY BETWEEN THE BLACK SEA AND THE CASPIAN SEA

Upon arrival in Tbilisi, the capital of ex-Soviet Georgia, in early April, we as foreigners each had to pay \$80.00 for our two week visas, but the disappointment was dissolved by the warm greeting from the members of the Georgian Christian Community who came to pick us up from the airport: we were suddenly showered with embraces and smiles, red tulips and warm joy. Gisela Thriemer, one of the priests from our Darmstadt Community in Germany, visits Tbilissi regularly as her affiliated community. Our group of eight had come with her to help out with the renovation work on their newly bought community house that was attached to the Church space. The apparent excitement was mutual - few of us had ever been in an Orthodox land, and we were about to experience one of the most hospitable and giving groups of souls we had ever known.

Our days began with The Act of Consecration in German, with the Lord's Prayer, the Creed, the Gospel and the Epistles translated into Georgian. The congregation each day was about 25, with an age range from 18 to 80. The community has 96 members, several of whom are out of the country, who were only able to pay an average of \$5 per month in the past few months into the community fund, due to overall lack of money for daily living. After the service there was a simple snack, and a lecture or gospel study with Gisela Thriemer, translated by one of the community members (many of whom spoke German). The themes were all to do with Easter and preparation for Easter. Rev. Thriemer also prepared a small children's garden celebration with an Easter story, as well as a course for adults, contemplating the roles of the four nature kingdoms during Easter week. The community members who attended the events during the day were often unemployed, and a few also took their vacation during this time.

In the course of the day there followed confirmation classes, youth group work, and the conversa-

tions and consultations that many people wanted to hold with Rev. Thriemer. Despite the hesitance of our hosts that their guests be put to work, the eight of us worked on sanding wooden doors, scraping wallpaper, installing insulation, and landscaping the small yard. The community is barely six years old, and only bought the half of the building where the chapel is three years ago; the rest of the building is newly bought, and those three rooms need to be fully remodeled. The idea is to make them into pleasant usable spaces, perhaps for a children's group, a beginning of a Waldorf Kindergarten in connection with the Christian Community. Behind the new part of the building is the small yard with a few vines and small trees. While we were there, one man pulled in a large tree stump/root from the street and started sculpting it into a beautiful swan with a chisel and hammer he found. A separate door opens into the Church community space, made up of the chapel, kitchen, and two large meeting rooms.

The biggest difficulties we encountered were, of course, lack of money to buy supplies to continue renovating, but also an apparent lack of true will forces that push an idea to its end. Our hosts were extremely creative and enthusiastic; however, their system was to begin something, to see how it went, and change the plan two or three times midway through. This is not to say that everything was half-finished, but it was difficult for us more or less practically minded people to work with the seemingly scattered work-methods we encountered. The sense of community is strong in that everyone listens to each others' suggestions on how to proceed, but lacks an effective system of deciding, for no one person is in charge. It was apparent that a priest would have a lot of work in many realms in this active community!

Each day an elaborate and delicious midday meal was prepared for us. We sat at the table for what seemed like hours until we were so full we could barely move. Sometimes we continued working, sometimes we went to explore Tbilisi in its various facets: the cafes with their incredibly artistic and tasty cakes, the bustling markets with each family selling the same cheap wares, the majestic building-lined

streets full of smiling people and newly green trees, or the many and various churches where people stream in and out, forever lighting candles in front of one of the saints' icons.

Twice we took a trip outside of the city, once to visit the ancient capital of Georgia, and its grand church with fascinating frescoes and stone-carved designs, and once to a city of rock-caves similar to those of the Anasazi. This latter site is still partly inhabited by monks, and rests majestic in its weight of history, fully unimaginable for our far western consciousness. Up to 5,000 people were able to take refuge there during the many wars throughout the centuries, for it lies in the wild, small Caucasus range on the border of Turkey. There was a chapel inside the cliff, also with beautiful frescoes on the stone walls surrounding a noble altar; these rooms were not primitively carved, but each corner carefully angled and formed, each doorway delicately arched as in a church.

During my stay in Georgia I was able to get a sense for Orthodox Christianity, which has meant everything to this culture. The Christianity in this land is ancient, having been brought by Saint Nino sometime in the 200s. The 2 or 3-hour long masses are frequent and well attended in each church. My experience of the people in the service was very different from observing how people live into The Act of Consecration: several are very distracted, even talking with someone else, several are standing, swaying in a trancelike soul state induced by the ambience in the mass: the icons all shimmer with gold decoration, the frescoes on the ceiling and walls tell silent stories, the priest's chanting lifts and wavers almost exotically, the warmth and light of the many candles permeates the room, and every few sentences of the several priests standing there are punctuated by a few seconds song from a group of women in the corner, or by the congregation kneeling to the floor or crossing themselves. I got the impression an entirely different soul mood is necessary to live into The Act of Consecration, a centering into our individual selves. Our participation in the ritual depends on what and how we inwardly offer ourselves to it, for it is outwardly simple, not giving us as much op-

portunity to float away in distraction towards the outward activity. Coming to The Act of Consecration having been in an Orthodox mass seemed to me a new step into one's self, one's individuality. In this sense the presence of The Christian Community in Tbilisi is small, almost unheard of by the public, but exciting. It has and will have a lot of work to do, in effecting a new understanding of community in a culture so marked by strong family unity and group religious experience.

Despite the almost hopeless state of the socio-political-economic and environmental situation in the country, I left feeling good, for that culture is a strong one: unique in the strength and beauty of its old Christianity despite being stifled for 70 years of Communism, and unique in its history of always being able to rise up from the constant suffering of wars. The strength and endurance coupled with the inherent spirituality of the people in this little piece of paradise could, with a major change in consciousness towards individuality, be a strong example for all of humanity.

Mary Graham
Stuttgart

After a practicum in the Darmstadt congregation, Mary Graham has entered the Stuttgart priest seminary, Easter 2000.

WORKING FROM CHRIST

a Three - Week Study Retreat

in Denver, CO, September 25 - October 13, 2000

These three weeks constitute a period of inward concentration and study, to which all those should feel warmly welcome who wish to deepen their relationship to the background and substance of the work of The Christian Community, as well as those who would like to learn about the vocation of the priest as it has found expression, in both men and women, since the founding of the Movement for Religious Renewal in 1922. (cont. p.8)



The Visit of the Three Angels to Abraham *Genesis 18:2* by Rembrandt

The Study-Retreat is grounded in the daily celebration of The Act of Consecration of Man and offers a balanced experience of study, artistic activity, exercise in observation, and conversation.

Week 1: Christology in the Light of Anthroposophy (Rev. Erk Ludwig), Week 2: The Archangel Michael and Modern Religious Life (Rev. Sanford Miller), Week 3: Evil: Divine Tool of Achieving Freedom (Rev. Michael Kientzler). Eurythmy with Robin Mitchell, Singing and Musical Exercises with Virginia Anderson.

Please contact Dona Totten at (303) 733-9908 or the church at (303) 758-7553.

Please send letters and literary contributions to Arie Boogert, 20 Lake Street, Arlington, MA 02474-8526, Phone/Fax (781) 646-4644. Due date for the next issue is November 15, 2000

THE CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY IN NORTH AMERICA, SINCE FEBRUARY, 2000

In a letter dated March 27, 2000, Erzoberlenker Rev. Taco Bay announced that the Reverend Oliver Steinrueck has been coopted into the circle of Lenkers, to be the successor of the Reverend Robert Patterson, who has held this office since 1981. After

his induction at the general, international synod of the priests in Wuppertal, Germany, in June, Oliver Steinrueck has continued to assist Robert Patterson, to take up his task fully at Michaelmas, 2000.

Rev. Everett Moraine, leaving Sacramento, has taken up his new assignment in Aberdeen, United Kingdom.

Rev. Daniel Hafner, who since his ordination in 1995 has worked in Berlin, has taken up his work in Chicago in the beginning of September.

Rev. Franziska Hesse, who after her ordination in March, 2000, has spent some months in Bern, Switzerland, has taken up her work in Sacramento at the end of August.

Opening Roads to a New World: The Senses Unbound at the Frontier/ Abrir Caminos a un Mundo Nuevo: Descadenar los Sentidos ante el Umbral.

This 109-page, dual language book contains the morning lectures given at the second Christian Community Inter-American Conference held in Lima, Peru in July 1999. Explorations of the various senses in relation to the steps of the Act of Consecration of Man are presented by Revs. Martin de Gans of Buenos Aires, Lenker for South America; Susan Locey of Toronto, Canada; Richard Dancey of Devon, Pennsylvania; Erk Ludwig of New York City; Douglas Thackray of Sao Paulo, Brazil, and Dr. Michaela Glockler of Dornach and Douglas Sloan, Professor of History and Education, Columbia University, New York. The closing sermon of the conference, by Rev. Pablo Corman of Lima, concludes the volume. Available for \$7 from The Christian Community, 906 Divisadero Street, San Francisco, CA 94115. All proceeds beyond the cost of printing will be donated to the next Inter-American Conference.