

THE CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY

MOVEMENT FOR RELIGIOUS RENEWAL

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Michaelmas 1997



St. Michael by Raphael

CENTERED

To be or become centered is certainly a state of mind we strive for in life. No-one really wants to be spaced-out or just at the periphery of happenings; we want to be in the center or at least orientated toward the center.

In our own being we experience that center as 'I' and know quite well what a sword with two edges this 'I' can be, i.e. that we need to be careful when getting involved. The 'I' could become the gate for the greatest blessings from above, it also could harden in itself and fend off everything and everyone approaching from "outside".

Concerning Christian Community life we may not be so sure how and toward what we are centered. Some speak of our Movement for Religious Renewal as "congregation-centered" and that this is something new to be striven for. Some think a sacramental movement can only be "priest-centered", because how could the sacraments be alive otherwise? Some do even proclaim that we need to move from one to the other because one seems to be experienced as 'aristocratic', the other as 'democratic'. (No-one actually has discovered yet that neither "aristocratic" nor "democratic" would be "politically correct" according to present day standards because one always implies the other!)

The question is whether we really could find in either of the two a real center, whether the two would not be an expression of those two edges of the sword, cutting edges as it were, not really leading to a true center if only seen as "either/or".

As Community of Christians are we not all, priests as well as congregations, "Christ-centered"? When we worship at the altar we are turned toward Him and toward God the Father who stands behind Him, and then time and again we face each other to affirm that Christ lives in us, that we want to be "Christ centered" together. Neither a new aristocracy nor a new democracy is called for but what we might call a Free Christian Socialism, one carrying the other's burden while realizing: it is not me alone, not just me, it is all the others too, and Christ in us.

"Christ in us" sends us that new spirit of togetherness whom we may experience as "holy" because he makes whole. He also makes a whole out of priests and congregations, out of individual and single 'I's, that we find our new "center" - the "Christ-center".

Werner Grimm
Vancouver, B.C.

ENGLISH SPEAKING CONFERENCE IN STUTTGART, GERMANY

Ascensionide, 1997

We came from all parts of the English speaking world: Australia, Canada, England, Ireland, New Zealand, South Africa, United States and Wales. There were 84 participants in all. We met on May 11th at the small but beautiful Pauluskapelle, just outside the center of Stuttgart. After being welcomed by the community and sharing an evening meal, we gathered in the sanctuary where Rev. Elizabeth Roberts of Great Britain officially opened our conference.

Our introductory talk by Rev. James Hinds (U.S.) contained the question, "Who is worthy to become a Priest?" His talk led our thoughts toward the next morning's event of The Sacrament of Ordination for Cindy Hinds. For the first time in 10 years, The Sacrament of Ordination was to be celebrated in English by Taco Bay. Our conference had been organized so that we could participate in this Sacrament.

For most of the conference participants this was their first experience of The Sacrament of Ordination in any language. To have the accessibility of the service in the English language was very special indeed. Through participating in this Sacrament, the Seven Sacraments of The Christian Community can now live in completion within each one of us. It was fitting that the gold of Ascensionide should be present at this celebration as a reminder that the sacraments are truly precious gifts to be treasured.

With the Sacrament of Ordination as our guid-

ing star, we entered into 3 1/2 days of conversation, talks and sharing. The conference setting was moved to the Nikolaus Cusanus House, "a living community for the aged" and home to 270 residents, as our numbers were too great to be accommodated at the Pauluskapelle. We were given use of the beautiful chapel in the house and fed wonderful meals by the house chef. The residents even moved their regular mealtimes to accommodate us. Not an easy adjustment for those used to a regular rhythm of life.

The Pauluskapelle Community supplied us with countless exquisite homebaked cakes for coffee time and gracious accommodation for us all. We found new spiritual families and loving ties that we will carry into the future. This vessel of warmth and physical caring allowed our conference to give birth to a wonderful community spirit. Each country or area shared a picture of the physical setting of their communities as well as a picture of the victories and struggles within the life of each community. Some spoke of their pioneer efforts, some of the struggles to establish stability after many years work, and some spoke of the pains of aging communities wrestling to find new strengths. As in all living beings, a picture of birth, growth, and decay came before us.

A common thread arose within these pictures: our deep connection to the Sacraments and our deep wish to support the work of The Christian Community locally and worldwide. Another commonality that arose for all the English speaking communities was the great need for English speaking priests. Indeed, for some participants of the conference, this led to serious consideration of the priesthood as a future goal.

Most importantly, we of the English Speaking Conference found our home among the German speaking roots of The Christian Community movement. Though we speak two different languages, we equally share a love and dedication to the Movement for Religious Renewal, as in "wherever Christ walks with me, I am at home", true words to describe our experiences here. The Whitsun flame already had been kindled in this Ascensiontide gathering.

My thanks to Rev. Elizabeth Roberts, Rev. Peter Allen, Rev. Rachael Shepherd of Great Britain; Rev.

Peter van Breda of South Africa; Rev. Martin Samson of Australia, Rev. Jim Hindes of USA; Rev. Ann Klemm of Ireland; Rev's. Ita and Taco Bay, Rev. Michael Kientzler, Rev. Irmgard Bauer of Stuttgart, for their leadership and many gifts during the conference. Thanks to Stephen Eyles of the Devon, England community for his organizational work, and lastly, to Rev. Cindy Hindes, for making it possible for us to participate with her in that most special moment in her ordination.

Gail Tulloch
N. Vancouver, B.C.

HELP PLANT A REAL AMERICAN SEEDLING IN 1999

Lima: the jewel of the South American Pacific coast; gateway to the Andes and to the Amazon jungle; a city in the desert, where every seedling planted needs special human care and attention in order to live, grow and bear its fruits. What better place can you think of to plant a spiritual seedling to bear fruits in the next millennium - such a seedling as could be the proposed All-Americas-Conference in Lima, Peru, 1999?

There are no details yet, only the idea and the impulse that grew out of the Kimberton Conference, 1995. You can help already! Do you have ideas as to a theme, a title, new forms for such a conference? If so, please do not keep them to yourself! Share them with your local priest or send them by mail or Fax to:

Paul Corman, El Ovalo de San Isidro 250, Lima 27, Peru. Tel/Fax 011-51-442-9703.

We are thinking about the days of July 26 through the 30th, 1999. Start planning now, what you may want to bring to help with the planting: a hoe, a spade, a watering can, fertilizer - the spiritual kinds of course. More later.

Paul Corman
Lima, Peru

NEW PERSPECTIVES

There are times when the work of The Christian Community seems to move painfully slow. The process of community-building takes much more time and patience than most of us are used to in our work or social lives. Try planting a bush in your church garden and observe how many people and circles you need to approach before making the first dig! Instead of planting a bush you might find yourself on a ladder painting a ceiling or trying to forget that you ever had the idea in the first place. The more we are involved in our communities the more we practice offering and letting go of our own ideas without losing an interest and enthusiasm for how they may be changed by our fellow members. Even that small bush needs to fit into the broader picture of our goals and life together.

So it is with a bit of surprise and joy that we announce a new, nation-wide initiative within The Christian Community. The English language journal of The Christian Community based in Great Britain, *Perspectives*, will be distributed from Chicago instead of from overseas and have more input from North Americans. Although this may seem like an insignificant, organizational detail, at closer look one sees the possibility for a more open dialogue with other congregations, both here and abroad. As North Americans, we value an independent, diverse way of thinking which may not be reflected in European journals. *Perspectives* is giving us the chance to share the insights of The Christian Community with our fellow Americans in a more soul-accessible way.

It should be noted that most of us in Chicago have never even read an issue of *Perspectives* (formerly The Threshing Floor). The current subscription rate is only 70 readers in all of North America. Our engagement came about through wanting to support the North American Newsletter and encourage communication between the congregations. It was assumed by us that not many people were reading or writing for the Newsletter. We were to learn differently very quickly. After writing a short article about Chicago in the last issue, we received an unexpected response. Not only had people read the article but

they were contacting us with good wishes and encouragement....a postcard from Peru, a generous donation for our building fund, greetings from Canada. Thank you! Our first lesson was not to underestimate the interest members have in other congregations and the joy we have in communicating with one another. Around this same time, we received a newsletter from the San Francisco Christian Community written for its members. This newsletter stood out because of the high quality of its format and content, and because of the impressive level of initiative coming from a congregation without a permanent priest. Our second lesson in communication was not to forget the resources and talent that we have in The Christian Community in North America, both in our membership and in our priests. So it was good timing when the *Perspectives* staff wrote asking for help with distribution and offering to open up to more diverse viewpoints. Their wish has been to reflect the ideas of the entire English-speaking world within The Christian Community. Therefore, with the thought of the interest and talent of members in North America, a whirlwind of events happened which led to the following results:

1. The Chicago Community will be responsible for distribution of *Perspectives* in North America. This will include some promotion with the help of individual communities.
2. The San Francisco Newsletter editors will share their articles with *Perspectives* for regular publication. This will insure a steady input from this side of the ocean.
3. North Americans who are willing to write articles will send them to Chicago from as many congregations as possible. Thoughts on the festivals, insights from a Gospel Study or reports on community events are welcome. You do not need to be a professional writer!
4. North Americans hopefully will subscribe to *Perspectives*. (See details below.)
5. The editors of the North American Newsletter will be in close contact with the *Perspectives* distributors. *Perspectives* is meant to enhance and not replace the Newsletter.

There are times when the work of The Christian Community can move slowly, but there are also times when events jump quickly from one to the other like a skipping stone. This *Perspectives* initiative is an experiment. None of us in Chicago have the experience or expertise in distribution that we might need. Our hope is that our willingness to act will continue to open unexpected doors that may have otherwise remained closed. The risk is justified if we are able to help The Christian Community build a sense of community and vision for the future and to make a difference in the lives of individuals. The bush blooming in the garden will help remind us that despite the pains to get it there, vibrancy and meaning in life comes through our efforts to reach out beyond ourselves. We encourage you to take part in this endeavor!

With best wishes,

Suzanne Steinrueck
for the Chicago congregation.

Subscriptions to *Perspectives* cost \$24 for 4 issues per year. Check payable to “The Christian Community” ear-marked for *Perspectives*.

To subscribe to *Perspectives* or to receive more information, please write to:

Perspectives Distributor
The Christian Community
2135 W. Wilson Ave.
Chicago, IL 60625

Report on a Christian Community Conference in Kimberton, July 1997

ANGELS, ARCHANGELS, AND THE FUTURE OF AMERICA - A PERSONAL VIEW

“Angels, Archangels, and the Future of America” - a provocative title for a Christian Community Conference, especially one following on the heels of the annual Waldorf Teachers’ Conference which addressed the spiritual tasks of North America. I am

lucky enough to have attended both. Their combined effect on me was more than just inspiring. From the depths of crisis, I have been working my way back into life, year by year expanding my horizons from myself to my family to my physical environment to my class. I intended eventually to embrace all of the U.S. and, ultimately the world in my consciousness, but I wasn’t ready yet, or so I thought. In preparation for that future consciousness, I had begun listening to NPR and reading snatches of “The Christian Science Monitor”, but I still knew myself to be an outsider, observing from the fringes.

The two conferences changed all that for me. I underwent shifts that moved me from the outside to the inside. At The Christian Community Conference, Karyn Martin-Kuri’s focus group - “The Spiritualization of the American Government” - was a *working* group. I had come eager to hear her insights on the matter, but much to my surprise there was none of that. Instead, she asked us to articulate our visions for our nation. This process culminated the next day in a prayer to which we *each* contributed (and committed to daily recital). It was an amazingly arduous process. I thought Karyn’s fiery will and bluntness would surely lead to confrontation and disintegration. But, lo and behold, as if by alchemy, turbulence, lethargy and resistance were galvanized into a true group creation.

The workshop of Paul Platt - “Apocalypse of Virtue: A Path of Discovery” growing out of the fruits of his work in Astrosophy - was very different from Karyn’s in style and substance. From the extroversion of the one I stepped into the introversion of the other and the vast realm of archetypes.

Following on the heels of The Act of Consecration of Man and choral singing, the daily seed-thoughts were exquisite. Richard Dancey suggested that our rational flower be the ubiquitous but humble dandelion whose brilliant yellow sun blazes, as do the sublime deeds of ordinary people, and then disappears into a sphere of fluff. Here the filament of each “parachute” is connected to the central seed as each human being is connected to the Divine. He proposed that the firefly be our national insect. We American live so strongly in the realm of the will. It

is from this realm that moral intuitions flash as does the light of the firefly.

Karyn Martin-Kuri spoke passionately about Uriel as the recently celestially appointed (since 1988) archangel of America. His stern gaze has led us into this process of facing our past, atoning for it and clearing our collective conscience in preparation for the new millennium.

By the close of the conference I felt a much stronger connection with the individuals who make up The Christian Community. Amazingly enough, I seemed to be fast-forwarded in my development. Because of my budding understanding of where the U.S. fits into world development and Earth evolution, I can now encompass it with my consciousness. What a powerful conference!

Kathleen Reagan
Saratoga, PA
(member in Devon, PA)

INICLO/BREAKTHROUGH/ AUFBRUCH: 1997 WHITSUN CONFERENCE IN HAMBURG

I left Stuttgart with a sense of having been welcomed and warmed. A small corner of a city had opened its heart and invited foreigners into its midst, to gather and share in spirit.

I arrived in Hamburg, immediately lost and disoriented. The city seemed familiar in a big-city way, like my native Toronto. It is at once impersonal and international, ambitious and well-ordered. It sought to cater to the diverse concerns, languages, and callings of many visitors. What would it mean to break through to spirit here? How could I feel at home here, where I felt overwhelmed, dwarfed, and so easily misunderstood?

The Hamburg Congress Center provided a meeting place for the five day conference. The auditorium could hold all 2,800 participants. Up to 6 lan-

guages were simultaneously translated at once, received on wireless FM receivers. Lunch and dinner, and conversation could be found in the large dining hall. In makeshift rooms 57 different workshops could be held at the same time. Their many themes as diverse as the participants. 'Empathy', 'Born From Above Today', and 'Sacramental Consultation', were among the topics.

I stayed at a Rudolf Steiner school near the Elbe River. Most visitors there were from South America. I shared an emptied classroom with five men from Lima, Peru. The Latin Americans often came together in the late evening for music or prayer. Their spiritual courage and communality gave me a feeling of warmth in the large city.

The first evening, a Friday, a panel discussion by seven people of diverse professional backgrounds explored the theme, "Is Spirit Real?". Their question seemed to become: "How can people find spiritual ideals in common, and work together?" They agreed that we must listen to, and share in, each other's difficulties and dreams. This often means going outside one's zone of comfort to share a demanding creative impulse.

Michel Debus, a priest from the Stuttgart seminary, spoke on Saturday about "The Attack of the Adversary and the Power of the I". He described how the relationship of human beings to evil had changed. This is a synopsis:

Previously, a man struggled with the dragon within himself. He would learn from his errors, integrate and digest them, and emerge strengthened. Learning through pain to separate the essential from the non-essential, he would come to understanding. Now a hidden evil, which seeks to escape pain, fights against the evil which could be integrated. It works through the contemporary desire for illusions, amusement, and virtual reality. "A dark light which is forced on the human beings...a cold warmth,...an 'evil evil', prevents the contribution of evil".

New forms of violence, senseless, without aim or goal are becoming common. The violent person often has no relationship to the victim, but experiences a pleasurable inebriation, isolated in an interior world of

dark light and cold warmth. At the end of the twentieth century, the terror of the Holocaust is not now confined by any border, and there are many refugees and homeless.

What we require now is a new quality of home. The home of the ego is in the realm of becoming; the “I am”, in the “not yet”. Something wants to be produced which is already there. This home comes toward us, is closer to us. We can sense and feel it inside us. In this core of the I, the evil loses its power. Through this inner power of the I, we will not be poisoned, but can gaze into the future unhindered by comforts, and habits.

Attempts were made not only to accommodate the various languages, but also to let the foreigners share their experience. Saturday evening, a few individuals from far-flung congregations described their congregations’ joys and struggles in developing a sense of community. Some also described the current situation of their home country, as well as its history, landscape, climate, and peoples. The Act of Consecration of Man, as well as other presentations and talks, were given in various languages. There were also several remarkable performances, including concerts, a new oratorio, a circus, and a performance of Goethe’s “Urfaust”, in Czech.

There were 22 workshops for English-speaking participants, usually Englishmen. Some of the participants felt excluded, however, when the translation was intermittent. I was grateful to Ann Christine Klemm, now a priest in Northern Ireland, originally from Oregon. She helped facilitate the workshop and translated for my benefit.

Elisabeth Roberts, a priest from England, gave a talk on the Monday, “Finding Stillness in Chaos”. This is a summary:

Michael Bauer described the inner home which is a condition of our being— we *are* this home. We can only exist out of what we are, if we give up all that we have relied upon.

In the world there is an increase in chaotic behavior, exploitation, anarchy, and fundamentalism. What arises and erupts in our being is often chaotic.

Our thoughts and boundaries can become blurred. We also experience feelings of fear, despair, and meaninglessness.

At the center of the chaos is a mystery, like the eye of a cyclone. There, no moisture or matter exists, but light shines through a small center of blue sky. This is like an experience of grace outside of time and space; the experience of being at home with oneself, in respite and repose, at rest in the still point. New perspective, new significance, new light is seen with eyes of the spirit. This makes it possible to cope differently from before.

In the stillness one begins to develop new faculties; a feminine, receptive empathy for others; and the ability to focus, make decisions, and plan - both faculties together. Christ enters so that both sides can be together in a synthesis, new, potent, and exciting. My everyday ego is silenced and united with the essence of my being which lies in my continual becoming. Over and over again, we need to return to the self that brought high ideals and intentions to the earth, to hear, “Let there become”.

The Whitsuntide challenge is that we may forget how we can work out of the still point. We need each other, to remind each other. Seeing others, their example teaches us compassion. In this we are equal. We all have to face up to who we are. Each of us must break through, go a bit further, increasing our tolerance to extreme situations.

Michael Ferrel
Toronto, Canada

OCTOBER 12:

Please send contributions to Dale Brunsvold, 2740
S. Ogden, Englewood, CO 80110 or e-mail at
dbrunsvold@aol.com by November 15.

CHICAGO CHURCH CONSECRATION

As many of you know, the Chicago congregation has purchased a one hundred year old church building. Essential remodeling has been completed. The church will be consecrated on Sunday, October 12, 1997, at 10 AM.

We are a small congregation with a big church - come and fill it for this occasion! Our address is: 2135 West Wilson Ave., Chicago, IL 60625. For information phone Oliver Steinrueck at (773) 989-8558.

'WIDENING LIFE BOUNDARIES': EAST COAST MICHAELMAS CONFERENCE

Friday, October 24 - Sunday, October 26

at

The Christian Community,
309 West 74th Street, New York

Special Guest:

Rev. Mechtild Oltmann-Wendenburg (Berlin)

For information, phone Rev. Erk Ludwig, (212) 877-3577, or Rev. Gisela Wielki (212) 362-7204.

'WORKING FROM CHRIST': A THREE-WEEK SEMINARY- RETREAT

October 19, 6 P.M.

November 7, 1997, 12:30 P.M.

at The Christian Community, 2135 West Wilson,
Chicago, IL 60625

This seminary-retreat will take place in the newly acquired and renovated church of our Chicago Center. It is intended to be the seed in North America of a seminary impulse of The Christian Community.

We hope that it will be the beginning of a regular program for all who wish to deepen their relationship to the background and substance of the work of the Movement for Religious Renewal, as well as a preliminary course for candidates for the priesthood.

The seminary-retreat will be grounded in our daily celebration of The Act of Consecration of Man and offers a balanced experience of study, artistic activity, and exercise in observation.

On some evenings we will meet for conversation to explore together the many cultural resources that Chicago offers.

COST: \$600 (TUITION: \$200; ROOM AND BOARD \$400).
FOR INFORMATION AND REGISTRATION PLEASE CONTACT
REV. ROBERT PATTERSON, 5236 N. VIRGINIA AVE., CHICAGO, IL 60625, PHONE (773) 334-7677.

OUR CONGREGATIONS:

Revs. Cindy Hindes and Jim Hindes have arrived at their new assignment in Los Angeles and have been officially introduced and welcomed into the community.

Correction and Additions (February 1997 address list)

Los Angeles USA (818) 762-2251
11030 LaMaida Street, North Hollywood, CA 91601
Rev. Cindy Hindes, Rev. Jim Hindes

For the moment, Western Massachusetts is without a resident priest:

Western Massachusetts USA (413) 528-3445
The Granary, 37 Rosseter St., Great Barrington, MA
[Mail: P.O. Box 658, Housatonic, MA 01236]
Contact Jonitha Hasse, (518) 329-7992 (or contact the New York priests)