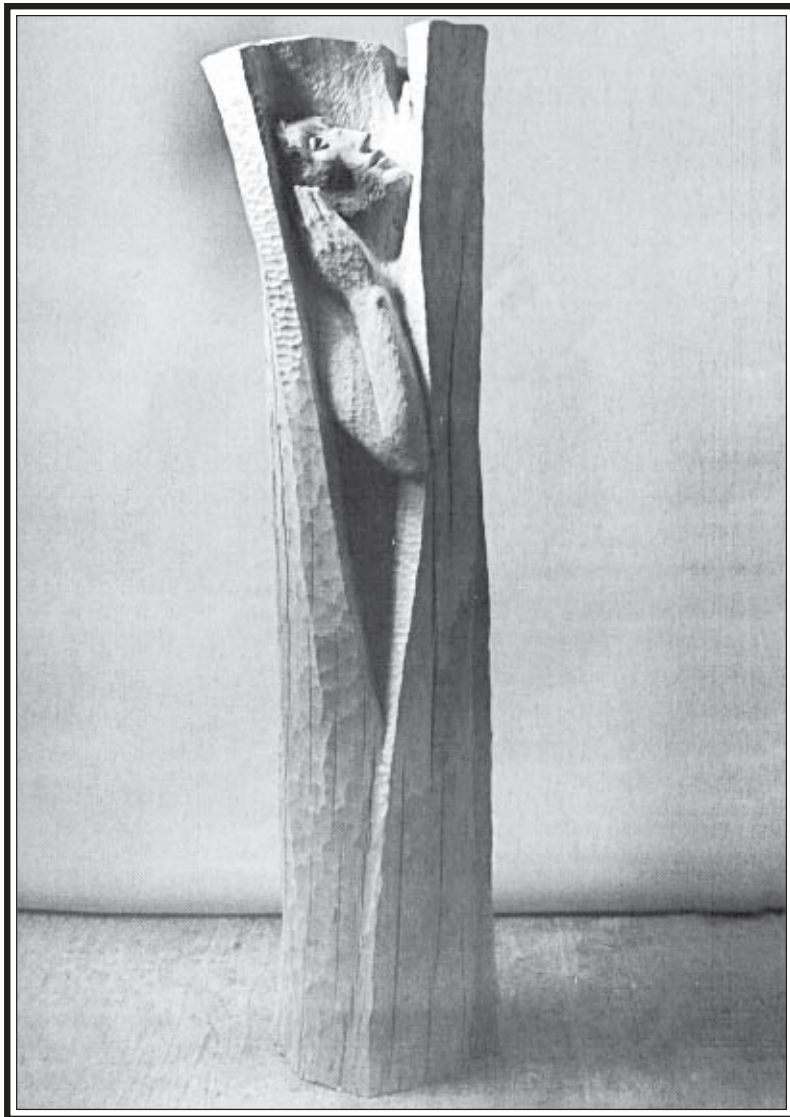


# THE CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY

MOVEMENT FOR RELIGIOUS RENEWAL

North American Newsletter • Volume 7, Number 3

## 1999 Advent ~ Christmas ~ Epiphany 2000



Raising of Lazarus by Manfred Wetzell

## THE PATH FROM ADVENT TO EPIPHANY

There is a pathway that leads from Advent through Epiphany. It spirals inward, dwells for twelve days in the light of Christmas, and turns to spiral outward again at Epiphany, January 6.

The path already began to turn inward at Michaelmas, for the dragon that we were meant to conquer is the rapacity of our own natural selfishness, the dragon of our own lower nature. This is of course not a one-time victory. The battles continue. And as we traversed the land of the dead in November, through the mighty pictures of the future from the Apocalypse, they warn us that we are to continue with the tasks and trials of cleansing.

In December and Advent we continue to prepare for the future. And inwardness increases both in our own soul and in the mood of the darkening natural world. The inwardness of both worlds finds its expression in the blue of the altar, a deep blue of infinite calm like the sky before sunrise. This is most appropriate, for in preparing for Christmas we are preparing for and awaiting the birth of the Sun God within us.

The inward spiraling from Michaelmas to Christmas is a picture for the development of all mankind. Each of us repeats this path in our own development. So just as the history of earthly man began with that fateful apple, each of us is given the apple of our destiny before entering this earthly life. On top of that destiny there rests the potential to ignite a higher self.

This potential is symbolized in the Advent Garden for children by the candle in the apple that each child carries on the spiral path toward the large central candle that the angel has lighted. We all spiral inward on our path through life, looking for the true center, led by our angel who has gone there before us. Each of us moves toward this center in his own characteristic way. Some of us, like some children, stride quickly and blithely, interested in everything there is to see in earth's garden. Others are more cautious, anxious to protect their light, and to find just the right place for it.

But eventually we all arrive at the center. This center is Christ's deed on earth. It is a deed that began its visible course with the birth of Jesus at Christmas, prepared by the illuminating plan of the Holy Spirit. At Christmas the altar is illuminated, clothed in the pure white sunrise of spirit light and the pale lilac of new beginnings.

The tender brightness of the twelve holy days of Christmas is a time set apart from the rest of the year. Its twelve days mark the difference between the solar year and the lunar year. The Christmas season shines day by day into each of the twelve months of the coming year. It illuminates our future. It is a time that brings special blessings into our future when we work with its deepening and enlivening. Participating in the act of mankind's consecration during each of these twelve days helps to bring special blessings for the coming year. It helps His light to illuminate us, to be ignited within us.

We could also see the whole of the year 2000 as a similar time set apart, for the second full one thousand years after Christ's birth will not be completed until the "end" of the year 2000. Thus although we think of the year 2000 as the beginning of the new millennium, it is also the twelve-month ending of the second millennium. So perhaps we could say that the entire year 2000 is a twelve-month "Christmas" season ushering in the new cycle of time. May the light we find in the coming year also illuminate that larger future!

Then on January 6, at Epiphany, the light from the altar deepens into a warmly incarnated magenta red, a red that faces the darkness of the future with love and trust. Mankind's future was illuminated by the star of Jesus' birth. Just as the children have lit their candles in the center of the Advent garden, we have again ignited our higher self at the altar, letting it shine in the center of our being, during this twelve day season. Now at Epiphany we begin to spiral outward again, out into the world, to illuminate its not yet kindled future path with His light. Along with others we will make the future light-filled. Together may we begin to make the world a luminous and beautiful garden of lights!

Cindy Hindes, *Los Angeles*

## YOUNG PEOPLE FROM NORTH AMERICA AT THE PRIEST SEMINARY

A total of thirty young North Americans have set foot inside the seminary of the Christian Community in Stuttgart since June, 1998. Last year a group of twenty, joined by six South Africans, joined the international student body of the seminary for a three week long Study course. This year, from June 6 to June 26, a group of ten participants from the U.S.A. was joined by two people from Britain and Spain. Some impressions follow, taken from this year's "Recollections", once more published by the New York congregation.

A WINDOW "It has been three months, more or less, since my three week stay at the Priest Seminary. I look back at it through the infinitely confounding chaos of college-life, and am calmed. I suspect that rarely in life does a person find a place that lends itself to reflection on the deeper aspects of life such as I found at the seminary. It was not that we didn't have loads of stimulus, activity and company to occupy our thoughts, but in many ways these influences only supplemented, guided, and reinforced a unique type of existence. [...] It was a dazzling, overstimulating life, and in many ways a much more pure, crystalline life, whereas now I am mostly muddled and spend the majority of my time preparing my future and making deadlines. Nevertheless, most of the time I am enjoying my current life, but I am very grateful that I was given the opportunity to re-envision the world and to reawaken to myself. I feel that I was shown a window looking onto a beautiful clarity, and that this is a window that I can still open to breath in fresh air when needed."

Noah Lowery-Clugston, age 20, USA

"Not only were the seminary students tolerant of our sometimes painfully obvious cultural differences. They were very friendly and always willing to help. [...] It has been amazing to be here for three

weeks of mental stimulation. Because the blocks are often only one week long, the teachers have to pare down subjects such as cosmology, in which we participated, to the core, to give us the essence. It can be overwhelming, not only to hold all of what we absorbed, but also to think that these are seeds planted into us and that we have to cultivate them ourselves. I was inspired to do so and am grateful for all the questions stirred up in me by all that mental 'bouldering'. P.S. Now, three months later, I am on my way to Germany for a practicum in the congregation in Darmstadt, before beginning my studies at the Seminary in Stuttgart."

Mary Graham, age 23, USA

"When I was a child I attended the Christian Community regularly with my family. I was an extremely shy little person and one could frequently find me clinging to the hem of my mother's skirt. But eventually the time would come when I would have to leave her side and go to the children's service. Standing in line, waiting behind the closed doors to the chapel, I would shake nervously until it was my time to enter. I would quickly walk up front and dare not look over my shoulder at the adults. Instead I would focus on the altar picture and listen to the words of the priest. During one part of the service, Rev. Dancey would take my hand, look into my eyes and ask me, 'Will you seek Him?' There was such warmth and security in his eyes that all nervousness melted away and my entire being would reply, 'I will seek Him.' It was because of this moment that I concluded that priests were heavenly beings, sent to us and that they couldn't possibly be regular people. The idea of becoming a priest seemed impossible to me. But now, after being here at this study course, my eyes have been opened to a seemingly infinite amount of possibilities. The main reason for this 'awakening' is the people. The rest of my group, the seminary students and priests are so open and sharing with their lives and thoughts that I now know priests are people too.

The idea of becoming one isn't so unimaginable anymore."

Susan Leddy, age 20, USA

THE AWAKENING OF THE SENSES "I was very interested to meet in person the artist [Manfred Wetzel] whose sculpture we had looked at the after



*Conversation by Manfred Wetzel*

noon before, in the Blue Room of the Seminary - the Raising of Lazarus. In a few moments, I noticed that the sculptures in his studio with their gestures spoke to me. They said that I had to listen to their souls. They invited me to touch them: they wanted to communicate something to me. What did they tell me? Then I came near one of those wood sculptures. What is your message? I asked. No answer came to me,

only silence. The wooden piece was forcing me to look more deeply, to search the being who lived inside of it. I realized that I had to change something of myself to get to perceive it. I had to awaken my senses. Now this feeling lives in my heart and I found a new task to develop: How to be awake in all the senses."

Ana Lazzare, age 18, Spain

## JOURNEY TO ANOTHER WORLD

Peruvians refer to Machu Picchu as 'the City of Light, the Crystal City, the City of Peace'. For almost 500 years, this sanctuary of the Incas, 'the Children of the Sun', lay hidden under jungle growth. In July 1911, Hiram Bingham, searching for 'the lost city of the Incas' in an exploratory journey sponsored by Yale University, was led to this mountain refuge by a shepherd boy. Now, 88 years later, 20 members and friends of The Christian Community in North America had the privilege and the joy of visiting Machu Picchu accompanied by the grandson and great grandson of its discoverer, Ben and Nathan Bingham of Kimberton, Pennsylvania.

Our journey together began for most of us in the airport of Atlanta, Georgia, where we gathered from east, west and midwest on the night of July 14 for our flight to Lima (where we would be joined by members of our group coming from Vancouver and Hawaii). On our first evening in Lima, Rev. Paul Corman, one of Lima's two Christian Community priests, led us on a delightful excursion (by city bus - itself, an adventure!) to a small neighborhood restaurant, open to the street, where we were introduced to the delights of Peruvian cuisine as Paul ordered one drink or dessert after another, mostly made from varieties of corn, each of which was passed around the table for all to taste. Already we were becoming a family!

Next morning we flew to Cusco, capital city of the ancient Inca Empire, 10,900 feet above sea level! Here we were met by Ulbaldo Quispe Esquivias, who would be our guide and teacher for the next seven

days. In the days ahead we would all grow to love this gentle, humble, holy man who shared so much with us of his own experience of and love for the traditions of his ancestors.

Surrounded by twelve sacred mountains, Cusco (Qosqo in Quechua) means 'Navel of the World'. It is laid out in the form of a puma, one of four animals sacred to the Incas (with the serpent, the condor, and the llama). At its head is Saqsaywaman, 'the Royal House of the Sun', where 100,000 people had recently gathered to celebrate the winter solstice (June 21). In the next two days, we would walk the narrow streets, marvel at the amazing stone work, and explore the sacred sites of this beautiful city of the Andes.

Very early Sunday morning, we set out on a three-hour train ride that wound above Cusco Valley, onto the plateau of Cusco, through the Urubamba Valley, along the Urubamba River to the beginnings of the jungle where Machu Picchu is located. Here we would stay until Tuesday afternoon.

How can I describe the deep beauty, calm, and peace of Machu Picchu? Here was led a life of offering, organized around 14 altars and oriented to the spirits of the surrounding mountain peaks, to the constellations of the stars, and, centrally, to the rising of the Sun. Perhaps it is this life of service, witnessed by thousands of precisely cut and carefully placed stones, that still ensouls this ancient sanctuary, which today draws visitors from every part of the world. Once 'the university of the Incas', Ubaldo said, he now envisions Machu Picchu as 'the university of humanity'. Ubaldo arranged for us to stay within the sanctuary one evening, after all the visitors had gone, to experience the passage from daylight to dark and the appearing of the stars, under which we gathered in the central Temple of the Sun for an evening ritual of prayer and dedication.

Our return journey included visits in the lovely Urubamba Valley to the PIsaq ruins, the great fortress of Ollantaytambo, and finally to the colorful PIsaq market where we purchased gifts and remembrances before returning to Cusco - and, on the next morning, to Lima - feeling we had stepped, for a time, into the timeless space of another world, a world of

harmony and beauty that, hopefully, will live on within us.

Melissa Kay, *San Francisco*

## **OPENING ROADS TO A NEW WORLD - THE SENSES UNBOUND AT THE FRONTIER**

Inter-American Conference in Lima, Peru,  
July 23-29, 1999

It is not difficult to feel, every time one crosses a frontier in the most literal sense and enters into another country, that the senses are kindled: one sees and hears and smells in a more intensive way, in that the senses are 'unbound'. In a figurative sense, the same thing happens every time when once more we enter the 'land' of The Act of Consecration - and this in Lima's beautiful church we were able to do, every morning of the congress, in different languages: in English, Spanish, Portuguese. These festive celebrations were the heart-piece of the whole event, and the seven lectures helped to unbind aspects of the senses at this threshold.

220 Participants is too big a number for people to be able to get to know everybody; but in the workshops, nearly all of which had very good participation, this really could happen. And during many other moments of the day, especially during the delicious Peruvian meals, 'inter-American' connections were forged. Unforgettable, how one of the founding members of the congregation of Cali (Colombia) described the state of war people live in over there, every moment of the day. Then the whole Colombian group performed a local legend, full of colors, movement, harmony, as if this were an expression of the angelical forces that hover above this plagued nation. We could also see the plans for their church, designed by another founding member who is an architect; the property of 1000 square meters has been donated by a local member.

The last day of the conference coincided with Peru's Independence Day. In big buses all of us went to the ancient city center of Lima, for a little bit of sightseeing and to sing a composition by Lothar

Reubke, directed by himself, of Francisco de Assis' Anthem of the Sun. It just happened, that the very center where the government buildings stand was closed to the public for security reasons. President Fujimori had dinner with ministers of state and diplomats. But then, one wonders how it is possible, our whole group, and only we, received permission to walk through the old colonial center of the city, free of cars and people ... At the other side we sang the Anthem for the second time, in front of the church of San Francisco. One could feel: we really were in Lima, and the Spirit of the locality not only allowed us to be there - He was happy to have us there.

Martin de Gans  
*Buenos Aires*

## **NEW CHAPEL IN THE TACONIC-BERKSHIRE REGION**

As described in the last newsletter, our community purchased a beautiful piece of land plus house and garage in May, 1999. Eventually, we hope to build a church from the ground up, but in the meantime we worked over the summer to create a wonderful chapel out of the garage. Our altar space is graced by a very beautiful, newly created altar painting by Laura Summer. We moved into our new chapel in time for Michaelmas.

October has been a time of celebration for us. Nineteen priests from across North America were joined by two from Germany for a week of working together. Hopefully the peace of our valley and the glory of autumn were a refreshing backdrop to their synod.

On October 24 we came together to dedicate our chapel. Forty children took part in the Sunday Service for Children and sixty seven adults shared in the Act of Consecration of Man. It was appropriate that this dedication should take place in the Michaelmas season, as we looked back on the courage and devotion to an ideal which has brought us to this point,

and ahead to the task of transforming our thinking to bring spirit into matter and to begin to grasp the majesty of each human being in our community and beyond.

The sermon by Cynthia Hindes, the words of blessing spoken by Robert Patterson, the addresses by George Riley and Peter Skaller all wove together to place this deed into our hearts.

George spoke of the gratitude and pride we may feel for what we have achieved. A building starts with an idea. Often when an idea becomes realized in matter, it may be disappointing. In our chapel, however, we can experience more than what we had envisioned. Perhaps this is due in part to the way we worked together. Every weekend for twenty two weeks people have come in smaller or larger groups to build and paint, to clean and garden and care. This has built the physical warmth of summer working as well as the human warmth of friendship and dedication into our chapel. Behind the group of seventy volunteers who have given over three thousand hours of labor stands the circle of sixty donors who have made the work possible. Behind these we recognize the help of those who have died and of other spiritual beings.

It shall be our responsibility not to keep what we here experience as our own private treasure, but to carry it out as light into the world.

Jonitha Hasse  
*Copake Camphill Village*

## **A NEW YORK SAMPLER**

September 1999 Conference on Human Embryology

My husband, Hal, and I decided almost immediately to attend the Conference on Human Embryology when we saw the flyer for it. It was to be held in September in the New York Christian Community congregation with Rev. Pearl Goodwin, a priest from Stourbridge, England. The subject is a fascinating one in its scientific aspect and seemed especially so

with this spiritual context. And it would be a wonderful opportunity to have an New York City experience and see again people we'd met the previous fall during the conference celebrating the 50th anniversary of the beginning of the work of The Christian Community in North America.

We arrived for the Friday night Evening Sermon with Music opening, which began with a brief evening service. Then, such unique images were woven together in the sermon that an awe and wonderment for our world could be felt, a real opening mood for the conference. And the music allowed this mood to enter even more deeply into consciousness. Afterward, there was just enough time to say hello to some folk before leaving for night quarters.

Saturday began with the Act of Consecration of Man. Then Rev. Wielki introduced Rev. Goodwin with good humor to a very full room of people. With clarity, and a directness of approach, Rev. Goodwin dove into the mysteries of the 'Heavenly Embryology of the Human Being'. The depth and breadth of her knowledge was soon very apparent and one had a sense that she could have easily expanded this conference time. Her audience did not easily let her come to a stopping point for lunch, so engaged were we all in her presentation. Hal and I took advantage of the three and a half hour break to take in a Japanese Tea Room lunch and an art gallery, and sample some New York life.

Rev. Goodwin continued in the afternoon with the mysteries of Earthly embryological development and again it was difficult to allow her to come to a stopping place. Much thought provoking material was revealed that has real educational significance for issues facing society at this time. Well, we finally did allow her to end for the afternoon, and we proceeded downstairs for feast and fellowship. How warm it was to share with others in this way. The evening was to bring two plays in the chapel. However, Hal and I took up the offer of a new friend to spend the evening with her at home.

The final section of the conference began with the Sunday Act of Consecration of Man. It was just wonderful to have this subject of the formation of the Human Being uplifted and permeated with the

reverence and richness of Christian Community ritual. It hallowed this final theme of 'The Path of Incarnation as a Christian 'necessity''. Enthusiasm rolled to the end and we were very much desirous that Rev. Goodwin return for a further installment in the mystery of human embryology.

Anne Rae  
Lancaster, PA

## **BRIDGEWATER RETREAT, SEPTEMBER 1999**

*Progressive Renewal - Bridge-building, a Fundamental Task of Religious Life* (250 years after J.W.Goethe's birth on August 28, 1749)

From Friday, September 3rd, until Tuesday, September 7th, 1999, a retreat of the Christian Community took place at Bridgewater Retreat Centre in Actinolite, Ontario. This was the first time I was able to participate, although retreats have been held in the beginning of September over several years now, and seem to make part of the sequence of precious events the Christian Community offers us throughout every year.

What did I expect of this retreat? The experience of community? The peace of nature? The disclosure of some of Goethe's most essential thoughts? Whatever the answers to these questions might be, the image of a 'bridge' stood quietly above our meeting, by chance reflected in the proper name of the place, and emerging in all its beauty through the reading of Goethe's 'Märchen'. The setting of the retreat center is pleasant, with cedar cabins loosely grouped around the dining hall. The deck in front of it is a playground for chipmunks besides providing you with a place to talk and to relax. Further back, and down the hill, the river broadens and invites you to dip into the water, or to a stop at the small beach. On the other side of the hill, and immediately on the banks of the river, lies the conference hall. All services and lectures took place here, and the first image that

comes to my mind when I think of our retreat is the view on the water from the lecture hall, where the scenery was so fitting. One almost expected the ferryman of Goethe's 'Märchen' to drive past, or the will-o'-wisp to trip in, or, of course, the green snake, mysteriously lit from within, to creep across the water.

Talks and lectures by the Reverends Werner Grimm and Hartmut Junge constituted the core of the retreat where, by the means of the works and biography of Goethe, the theme of bridge-building was to be explored. We were presented with a wealth of thoughts, and, through Werner's readings, with Goethe's poetry itself. The sublimity of the theme did not allow easy definitions. Rather, we were made aware of the places where energy can be found for the great task of bridge-building. Werner's opening talk, 'The Lord's Prayer, the Gospel and the Creed: Three Treasures to work with', clearly set the frame for all of the following themes. For the essential elements of our Christianity, as described in this lecture, are not in conflict with Goethe's way of thinking. A deeper study of his works reveals not only his insight into the spirituality of our existence. More specifically, the theme of evil and of salvation penetrates both parts of 'Faust', while the 'Märchen' culminates in a vision of a community in its highest form, such as described in the gospel. Goethe's poetical genius creates images which might not immediately be recognized as Christian, and yet give testimony to Christianity's innermost messages. Thanks to Werner's expressive presentations, 'Faust' and the 'Märchen' became alive in front of us and left their ever-new impressions. These were complemented by Hartmut's study of Goethe's biography as well as his description of the 'Metamorphosis of the Plant', both themes pointing at the dimensions of Goethe's interests and destiny, and enriched with illustrations and posters.

However, not everything was talk-and-lecture during our stay. We were treated to delicious meals, and we could draw, or sing, or play the recorder. These activities had been lovingly prepared. Thank you very much! Of course, the hours and days went by much too fast. If any improvement may be sug-

gested at all, I would ask if a hike could be planned, perhaps even some star gazing, when we meet again. Bon Echo Provincial Park might offer itself for an evening picnic, and, in this way, an encounter with nature would be included, where we could take in, and store some of its healing forces. Thank you to all who prepared and carried out this program, and greetings to everyone who participated!

Monika Sanatani  
Sudbury Ontario

## TRACING RUDOLF FRIELING'S FOOTSTEPS IN NORTH AMERICA

Our San Francisco congregation produces a great quarterly newsletter, aptly named *The Golden Doorway*. In its Michaelmas 1999 issue (Volume 3, Number 4), one of the editors, Dietlind Kionke-Thoemmes, takes up a suggestion to trace the activities of Dr. Rudolf Frieling in North America. A truly international person, he spent 5 years in North America, based in our New York congregation. During those years, before returning to Stuttgart as the one designated to succeed Emil Bock as *erzoberlenker*, he also traveled extensively on the continent. If you have knowledge and/or memories of his footsteps, please contact Dietlind to work on this project: Dietlind Kionke-Thoemmes 108 Greenwood Avenue San Rafael, CA 94901-3625 Phone (415) 258-0890

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