

# THE CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY

MOVEMENT FOR RELIGIOUS RENEWAL

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## Advent ~ Christmas ~ Epiphany 1996/97



The Annunciation of the Shepherds by Rembrandt

## THE HOLY CHRISTMAS THREE ADVENT-HOLY NIGHTS-EPIPHANY

There is in life a truly mystical side which deals with spiritual realities and seems to neglect the realities of nature. E.g. when we celebrate Christmas and nature does not reflect the traditional "Snow and Ice" as easily happens in our temperate zones of the North and naturally is even more the case when we celebrate in tropical climates or in the Southern hemisphere.

We become aware that the Darkness and Cold as the background for the Birth of the Child cannot really be figured out by meteorological standards nor can the birth be determined by astrological considerations. Both meteorological and astrological applications have their importance when we want to determine the more immediate or individual circumstances e.g. what influence the weather or the stars had on any given birth.

When pondering The Birth, cold weather or individual 'horoscope' ("observing the hour") are not what really points to the truth i.e. to the "Mystical Fact" (Rudolf Steiner) but rather that December is Birth-Time. This was even the case outwardly in olden times when life generally was still embedded in the mystical veils of the Godhead: children were born around the time when we now celebrate Christmas. Later on - and according to Rudolf Steiner still today - the souls of all those beings born in the course of the whole coming year do come down close to earth at Christmas time. That is birth time - and, for the World Child; this is when we honestly can celebrate His birth which is the Birth of Births standing for and, in a certain way, regulating all human births. Christianity was proclaimed by the initiate of our age to be a "Mystical Fact" not a mere historical fact. The historical side is there too - although we are not able to gather it from the holy (mystical) scriptures; but it is mentioned in our Creed through the name of Pontius Pilate, the Roman general and governor. Thus the Mystical Fact is anchored into history but from the vantage point of The Mystical Fact. The Christian Birth Festival celebrated wherever on earth, be-

longs to December and any meteorological and astrological considerations belong to another level of life.

Thus we celebrate Christmas as the Mystical Fact which itself is anchored in the archetypal three-foldness: Advent, Twelve Holy Nights of Christmas, Epiphany. We do not intend to derange the archetypal image of The Holy Trinity through astrological implications which figure~ on an entirely different level of life. But we may stand in awe before the Highest Godhead reflected in the meaning and sequence of these birth festivals:

Advent, the Arrival of Christ, designated the Birth "in Eternity" (our Creed or as the medieval mystic Johannes Tauler called it "Birth before all Time" out of the Father God. The Twelve Holy Nights of Christmas, the Birth of the 'everlasting' present when we proclaim "To-day Christ is born" and Tauler spoke about the "Birth in Time". That is the Birth of the Child, the Son of the Father. Epiphany tells us that the Star child has "appeared"; it is the Festival of The Appearance and this appearance shines into the future, it means the Spirit Birth in us or what Tauler thought of as "Birth Beyond all Times". The new birth that will last for "all cycles of time to come".

When celebrating Christmas this shows how we enter that sphere of the spiritual where the Christian festivals are mystical facts. Thus our Christian Festivals are entirely independent if understood on their level, far beyond all considerations of climate, hemisphere, seasons and astrological suggestions.

Werner Grimm  
*Vancouver*

## PHILLIP NUSBAUM EULOGY

(with a few additional remarks) delivered at the funeral of James Phillip Nusbaum by Peter Skaller. Part I had been at 6:00 P.M. on September 2. Part II at 3:00 P.M. on September 3, 1996. The services were conducted by Robert Patterson, and were held at the Dayo-Davis Funeral Home in Columbus, Ohio. Thirteen priests from North America, and Michael Debus were present, along with Phillip's wife Thea, his chil-

dren Robert, Frances and Angela, his father, brother, sister, nephews, mother-in-law and son-in-law, and numerous friends and community members from all over North America. The coffin was open during Part I.

Dear Thea, Robert, Frances, Angela, Mrs. Drew: Dear Mr. Nusbaum, Taffy, Daniel and other family members; Dear Community of Priests and Friends of Phillip Nusbaum;

Who would think that the automobile could be the thing that the Powers of Destiny would use to lead a soul into the Path of the Spirit? As a young student of 20 at Earlham College (Indiana), Phillip was in a serious accident in which he, because he was not wearing a seat belt and was thrown free of the car, was unharmed while another person died. This event apparently pushed him to leave school to seek the deeper meaning of life, and to find the work of Rudolf Steiner through a friend of his mother.

And now, after 35 years of inner work and preparation, another so-called accident in a car, this time taking him directly into that very world which his soul longed to know. We can only speculate what role his this time firmly buckled seat belt may have played in facilitating the injuries leading to Phillip's death. And one can only feel awe upon realizing not only the symmetry of these events, but also that both of these accidents occurred in this very area where we are gathered, so near to where Phillip grew up in Richmond, Indiana. The day before the accident, he had visited his father, over 90. During the carefully planned trip from San Francisco to his father's, he had stopped to see a number of people who had been important to him in his life. There were no further scheduled visits between Indiana and Boston.

Of course, with such an accident we yearn to find a deeper meaning. Phillip himself certainly did not accept the concept of "accident." He believed in a destiny created out of the soul's inner laws. As a priest, he too would seek to penetrate the meaning in the tragedies of life which others faced.

Phillip was alone, with his dog Alamo, en route to a new priestly "sending out" in Boston, for which, at least outwardly, he seemed eager and hopeful. He was leaving San Francisco, which had been a diffi-

cult and often painful experience for him. Earlier in the year, the decision had been made to no longer have a resident priest in San Francisco, and to serve it as an affiliate of Sacramento. Had he made it to Boston, he would perhaps on this very Sunday just past, have read as the gospel reading for this date, about the sending out of the 70 disciples as harvesters of souls. He would have read about the admonition to "shake the dust from your feet" had a city not received them. Phillip had, over the years, wrestled with how the community in San Francisco was struggling with poor attendance and financial contributions, and with whatever conclusions he had come to, or was seeking to come to, he must have been working hard during his trip across America, to reconcile, make peace with, and "shake-off" the past to make room for his next assignment.

I would like to read to you from a journal which Phillip wrote during a solo canoe trip during August or 1987 (this material was not intended to be kept private, for it was put up for sale at an Advent Fair in our church in Toronto). As we know, Phillip loved canoeing, and shared this love and his skill with many children at Heimdall Camp, which he founded. On this trip, which true to Phillip's way he had organized down to precise details, he went alone into the northern Ontario bush. He put his canoe into the water on Friday, August 7. On Sunday, August 16 is the following entry:

"I made the decision to... wait it out for help on Resound Lake. I have enough food to last me more than another week. and by that time hopefully the Ontario Provincial Police and my wife and church people will have a search going for me...To help somebody spot me. I stretched out my orange...rain tarp...and made a big SOS on it with silver duct tape."

What had happened was this: the river leading into Resound Lake was so strewn over with fallen cedar logs that Phillip could barely get through. The portage had been an ordeal, and had cost him too much time, energy, and too many bruises. He was worried about the exit river. Would it be more of the same? Upon discovering that it was, he resolved to end his trip and wait to be airlifted out. On August 17 we read: I'm often reminded in certain life situa-

tions of an old Chinese proverb, 'Be careful what you wish for, because your wish may come true.

August 18, while waiting: I'm reading a good book for children about the twelve disciples and another, more for philosophers, about St. Paul. I've gotten rid of five mice, but not without feelings of moral disgust. Yet doesn't God's order of the planet include that each species defends its nesting rights against the others?...I don't fancy little feetsies across my face during the night. But I know that animals feel pain and I don't want to cause them to suffer. Some people also say that, along with everything else that comes back to us after we die, so does all the pain we've ever inflicted on animals."

In the midst of a journal which mainly reports about the outer, practical, and natural history aspects of his trip, comes this little revelation of Phillip's inner life of deep thought, moral uprightness, tenderness of heart, and even this way he had of suddenly inserting a little silliness out of context. The phrase "little feetsies" is one in which all can recognize something so characteristically "Phillip."

On August 19: This morning I couldn't resist the temptation to finally make my way to the top of the hill and climb the fire tower. About half-way up I heard a helicopter or plane passing...over... I was buried in thickets and bush and could not signal him. I hoped maybe he had seen the SOS. I reached the fire tower and climbed the rungs, slowly and nervously, right up into the top of the box... What a life it must have been in those days to spend hours and hours up here alone"

We feel Phillip canoeing alone, then driving across country alone, and then this paradox about him: he reveled in social intercourse and joviality and really liked people, yet he also kept himself private, very alone, so that one felt he stood both in the midst of those around him, yet also somehow cut off.

He was rescued on August 20 at about 10:00 A.M., whether by plane or helicopter is not clear. His final journal-words were: Oddly enough, the most intense part of the trip was these last three days, at least inwardly, as many painful insights closed in on me. And I found that dealing with apprehensions can be even more of a struggle than dealing with physi-

cal terrain.

There are striking parallels to the events around his automobile accident, which occurred at 9:00 A.M. on August 24, in Lancaster, Ohio. Phillip was soon air-lifted to Ohio State University Hospital in Columbus (virtually the same date and time as his rescue in 1987). He was on a solo journey, all carefully worked out. The difficult path behind him was being digested. On the canoe trip the path ahead was deemed impassable. How did he really regard what lay ahead in Boston?

Phillip lay in a coma, on a respirator, with his wife Thea at his side until he crossed the threshold at 12:45 A.M. on August 30. Robert Patterson came quickly after the accident, and gave Phillip The Last Anointing at 2:30 A.M. on August 25. So this time his wife, and "church people" did search for him and help him. After the Anointing, he apparently rallied somewhat, but after a sharp turn for the worse, in keeping with Phillip's stated wishes, the respirator was disconnected. He did not take a single breath thereafter.

Although one might feel that his rescue this time was to no avail, or even recoil at the thought that perhaps there may have been obstacles ahead which could not be overcome in this lifetime, I am confident that Phillip would agree that "where one way comes to an end, a new, and higher one can open," and that this is a law for all human beings, however it might reveal itself in the specifics Or different destinies.

Phillip was not given to writing about his experiences for others. Why then did he have this journal reproduced and put on sale, and why was he so disappointed when it didn't sell well? What did he really want us to read? Perhaps it was ultimately written to help us deal with the tragedy Or his death, and to show us something about life, struggle, obstacles, death and the ever-present help of Beings of Spirit who, from above, seek to bring us forward out of love.

Phillip Nusbaum was born on October 31, 1938, a Scorpio-Eagle if ever there was one! Upon discovering Anthroposophy, it was as though he soon sensed that the warm updrafts of meaning were originating

not from the hills he was soaring in and over, but from the sun. With a resolve not typical of someone in their early twenties, he spread his wings and headed for Germany, the “sun” of anthroposophical life.

Now Phillip always had a proclivity for, shall we say, the outrageous. (Picture his wild bouncing up and down while leading children in “Pull down the Chain” or “Headstrong Horses” at Heimdall Camp.) What could be more outrageous than for a Quaker to enlist in the army to find peace? It was the only way he could finance going to Germany. Unfortunately, he was stationed for 3 years in France, but he chose to spend an additional year in the army if he could be placed in Germany, which he finally was. There he met The Christian Community. Upon returning to the United States, he again headed for a “center,” this time Spring Valley, New York, where he met Dorothea Drew. They were married in 1967, and have raised three children, Robert, Frances and Angela.

After finishing college at Adelphi University, then getting a Master’s degree in Library Science from Columbia University (both in New York City), and teaching for a while, he spread his wings again. And so it was back to Germany to the priest’s seminary in Stuttgart. He was ordained on March 17, 1973, and among his fellow ordinands was Hartmut Junge, with whom he would later work as colleague for 8 years in Toronto, after first serving in Rendsburg, Gernany, and then Chicago.

In 1987, I was ordained and sent to Toronto, as Hartmut moved to Detroit. As a greenhorn fresh out of seminary, I had the good fortune to have Phillip as .mentor and colleague. He never “pulled rank” on me, always openly shared and discussed what he knew, and took great care in arranging that my family could settle well in Toronto.

Shortly after I arrived in Toronto, a man in our community, a loner, committed suicide. Phillip asked me to accompany him to his apartment I remember Phillip’s composure and sovereignty, but also his compassion. The scene we found was disturbing, yet Phillip remained calm and unruffled. Here was revealed another paradox in Phillip’s nature. When small things went awry, when there were small

glitches in events, he would often “lose it” in a short-lived fit of temper. But in important crises he was a rock; firm and centered, upright and clear thinking.

An example of a “small” thing: Once I was sitting in the basement office of our church waiting for Phillip to arrive for our weekly meeting. The upstairs door opened, and I heard his briefcase snap open. Suddenly there shot out an “OH, NO!!!” which permeated every corner of the church and shook the foundations. He had forgotten one of the three pairs of glasses he constantly juggled on and off his face! If the glitch was caused by another person, the poison tail of the scorpion side of his nature could flick out with lightening speed.

Phillip had a huge heart, cared deeply about, and got personally involved with people’s problems, even to the point of giving money out of his own pocket. Yet here too paradox was present: he was often blind to the subtleties of tact, and could wound with that stinger of his.

But there is something critically important to our remembering of Phillip. In the middle of the paradoxes of his nature, his sociability and aloneness, composure and temper, gentle magnanimity but also seeming tactlessness, lay something that resolved these. Phillip’s being radiated joy, goodness, playfulness, light, and an incredible youthful vitality and zest for life. And it was these ever-present qualities which made it possible for those whom he served to feel that the true Sun, the Christ, which he soared like an eagle to find, was present in him.

Had he been at the altar last Sunday in Boston, he would also have read these words from Luke 10: “If they reject you, they reject Me. If they accept you, they accept Me.” These words are another form of the difficult words spoken to the congregation in our Sacrament of Ordination: “Stands he (the new ordinand) before you, then stands the Spirit of Christ before you.” Each priest, and each congregation wrestles with this idea, as did Phillip. For Christ was indeed perfect. Here we may catch a glimpse of a profound mystery of Christianity. The 70 who were sent out were decidedly imperfect, which we can gather from what we know about the 12, and about St. Paul. Here lies a most significant difference be-

tween Christianity and other religious streams, where the messengers are often shown as almost super-human masters, bodhisattvas, gurus and even wonder-workers. Christ can reveal Himself in what can shine subtly as a quiet constant in and through our earthly weaknesses.

As one person in Toronto said: "Phillip's face was like a sunflower." Or as a 14 year-old said in remembering Phillip: '~here were never any 'bad vibes' around him." And another child: "His face was always somehow smiling." These kinds of distilled essences could not have been gleaned from reflecting on how Phillip actually was in the ups and downs of his life. Rather, these people were revealing the final effect of his be~r~...what was there radiating as a mighty conviction, as devotion and love, behind, in and through how he stood before us. This is why so many loved and found ~oy in him: that through his soaring to the Sun, he was able to bring this light into the midst of our crazy world. It was palpable in his radiance for those who could see and feel. Thankfully, many could.

No description of Phillip Nusbaum would be complete without a word about his relationship to his violin, which somehow seemed to always be "conveniently" handy. Bach, blue-grass, square-dances, Improvisations...he loved playing them all. He played solo or in ensemble, in The Act of Consecration of Man, for baptisms, at confirmation receptions, at summer camp, in music camps, at parties, indoors or outdoors. Once he even auditioned for the right to play his violin in the subway stations of Toronto!

Phillip Nusbaum is the first Christian Community priest to have been born in North America and to die in North America. Both these events took place right in what is known as "the heartland" of our continent, in the "middle." Perhaps we may take great hope in this gesture. While the way to continue in Boston was not to be, perhaps The Christian Community has now finally and fully come down on our continent, has found an abode. And as we know, Phillip was a master at finding and preparing homes, were they for summer camps and retreats, for families to live in, or for The Act of Consecration of Man.

## The Season's Star

The season's star  
Stalls in the sky,  
Yet many ~till wander  
And pass it by.

Wise men wake  
And watch the sign  
While shepherds heed  
The word on High.

The child coos  
Like a dove,  
Gracefully fallen  
From above.

See him turn,  
And hear him cry;  
The Christ child takes  
A human guise.

He in earthly time  
Will dwell,  
And salvage restless  
Souls from hell.

Now his mother  
Gives him rest,  
And holds him closely  
To her breast.

The holy family's  
Humble home  
Hides the infant  
Christ unknown.

A saviour now  
We celebrate,  
A baby born  
To change man's fate.

What then the infant  
Could not say,  
Is heard around the  
world this day.

Michael Ferrel, Mississauga, Ontario

## A SUMMER ADVENTURE

Imagine yourself at a beautiful, calm lake surrounded by miles of forest and fields of grass here and there, sporting some of the most varied wildflowers and all the magical elements that nature provides. Then add to your picture little huts and tents tucked neatly into the forest bordering the lake, a larger wooden building in one of the fields and little pathways connecting them all. Now add about a hundred children between the ages of eight and thirteen, and 30 staff members busying themselves with swimming, boating, hiking, archery, painting, singing, acting, playing music, building instruments, building campfires, running, playing ball, washing laundry, eating, sleeping, cleaning, cooking, baking, washing dishes, setting tables, reading books, writing letters, chattering, listening to stories, laughing, crying, and sometimes sitting still and observing everything around them or thinking about where and who they are. You have just pictured The Christian Community Summer Camp in northwestern New Jersey this past August.

“Wake up! Wake up! The rooster has crowed...” was one of the many songs the staff sang to wake the children each day. After a hearty breakfast in the dining hall and cleaning the campsites, everyone gathered for the morning assembly, which always began with glorious singing, singing, and more singing. Every day Rev. Richard Dancey told another part in an ongoing adventure story. Following the morning assembly, the children engaged in the manifold activities mentioned above, until the lunch bell rang. A wonderful silence settled over the children as grace was said, and then - mountains of food disappeared in minutes.

The mid-afternoon naptime was appreciated by many, but I think most of all by the kitchen staff! Activities resumed in the afternoon, and some of the culminated in the Fair Day. Each group constructed and organized a game of fun and sport in which all participated. Supper was followed by a volleyball game for staff only, during which time the children played freely until evening assembly. Two were chosen each night to light the candles, and again the hall

was filled with singing. Rev. Gisela Wielki told the heroic story of Joan of Arc. The pictures that our two excellent storytellers brought were alive and imaginative, captivating the attention of every listener. It was evident from the expressions on the children’s faces how fully they related to the challenges, joys and sorrows of both evening and morning stories, which were highlights of the day. An evening verse was spoken together. Bedtime.

A short service, offering inner strength for the next day, was held each evening for the staff, who then met to review the day and plan ahead. A picture of each child was brought to mind over the course of the two-and-a-half weeks in these meetings. I was not there for the three days of preparation prior to the children’s arrival, when camp directors and counselors organized everything, but it was striking to me how the love and care woven into the rhythm of the day formed an invisible, protective sheath around the whole camp.

I think the children were faced with many difficult challenges. For some it was a testing of their physical endurance, and others were faced with the difficulty of social integration, but the camp spirit gave courage to each child to overcome his or her particular challenge. Though there were occasional tears due to homesickness and social discord, one could sense that each child left with many joyful memories and an invaluable life experience.

Angelica Strube  
*Spring Valley, NY*

## IN MEMORIAM

Over forty years ago I met Phil Nussbaum, a young man, at the Threefold Farm, one summer, and loneliness had a friend — Phil and I could talk out of the same heart experience of life, out~ of the discovery of anthroposophy as young Americans, an existential talk — then, suddenly, on his way here to Boston to live, to start a new life, he is dead.

The logic of his life leaves something missing in mine, a friendship that would have started again, though I didn’t even know of his coming. Only that

this conversant of my youth was living in California, ministering.

Then the phone roused me from a late afternoon drowse. Susan Lowndes calling. She had news that an article on the Lord's Prayer, something certainly that Phil and I would have wanted to talk about, had at last been printed in PERSPECTIVES. A piece stemming from the interface between prayer and meditation, a piece to pursue. ~'A lot of people are going to get something from that," Susan said, and here, this subject, held new opportunity for a book — but did I know the congregation's news, what was going on? No.

Phil Nussbaum, on his way to his new post in Boston, at the Brookline Christian Community, had died in an auto crash. It was a blinking red light in Columbus, Ohio; he stopped. He was in his wife's van, on the way to taking up residence in Sanford Miller's house with Thea, his wife, who was flying separately with her aging mother, and he must have thought that light was four-way stop blinker because he started up and a trailer tractor van hit him for a loop at the intersection. His dog lived. Phil had brain damage, never woke up, and died at the hospital. He was looking forward to playing his violin with persons unknown in Boston and Brookline, and I might have been one of those persons with my flute, a kindred soul, after many years.

The accident and loss struck me a personal blow, the more so because I knew none of this until it was all over. "A grieving congregation," as Susan put it and despite my many absences on Sundays, I was part of it and had lost a friend that life, in some way, had been holding back from me, but who had been on his way to the future and mine. Gone. By a cruel stroke of the highways, the road of life.

As I put the phone down it seemed to me that there was something to make up for here, as well as to grieve. A question, as if machinations of roads, computers, TV, cities are taking the logic out of our destinies and death, shortcutting the dignity of our lives. So this memory will be a challenge to make up, a challenge to put those things into life that modernity is lacking, beauty, truth, the good.

I pluck a flower in my soul for Phil, a sunflower,

and place it in the memory of this man who I was destined to re-know, but didn't, and visit the graveyard of our century with Thea and Susan to place a prayer at his memory, without stone, of what was to be.



**JAMES PHILLIP NUSBAUM**  
**October 31, 1938 - August 30, 1996**

Travelling across the country from the West coast to the East coast, anticipating a new beginning, Phillip was in an accident near Columbus, Ohio on August 24th, just two hours from his place of birth. Airlifted to Columbus, he gave his family, friends, colleagues and future friends a few days to recover and reorient, and then, with his family at his side, he decisively left on his chosen journey. Phillip never regained any consciousness, but rather lay in absolute peace, his face without a line, his mouth with a quiet smile.

The funeral took place in Columbus, Ohio, on September 3rd with family, friends and colleagues from all over the continent gathering in love and gratitude, each remembering the part of Phillip's life each had shared.

I, along with our children, Robert, Frances and Angela, wish to express heartfelt thanks for all the gestures of outpouring warmth and support we received during the transition. Without doubt the prayers and thoughts offered over the world helped Phillip peacefully find his way and aided the family in accepting this heart-wrenching turn in our paths.

Dorothea Nusbaum