

THE CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY

MOVEMENT FOR RELIGIOUS RENEWAL

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Elijah and the Angel in the Desert by Rembrandt

Praying for Others in a Michaelic Age

By James H. Hinds

There are times when we are aware that a friend is going through a difficult time. Perhaps we are unable to help directly because he or she lives far away, or perhaps the need is so deep that no amount of external help could reach the pain. Perhaps the inner battle being fought is so intimate that only God can see what is really at stake. We see suffering and need, would like to help and are only able to wish and pray for our friend.

Prayer for others is known traditionally as intercessory prayer. We turn to the spiritual world, a guardian angel or God, however we may conceive him, and ask that someone we know be helped in a specific way. Yet there is a danger that such prayer may become too specific. For example, we may pray that a friend find a job or even a specific job or that he or she be "blessed" by a financial windfall. Prayer directed to the spiritual world in which the requested form of grace is too detailed may be powerful but it can also be very risky. As mere human beings we lack the wisdom and perspective of the angels necessary to know what any given individual really needs. And yet, because prayer does have power it is possible for us to bring about a situation that does not help an individual's true spiritual growth.

Nevertheless, there are three things for which we can always pray for a friend. These three are so objective that no room is left for our merely personal, egotistical desires for the other person: ***light, strength and peace***. We can always pray that someone be enlightened, that he have insight into his life and into the situation in which he finds himself. We can pray that he find the strength to do what his insight tells him needs to be done, that he have the energy to follow the path that has become evident to him. We can pray that he have peace and calmness, the tranquility to endure whatever hardships his life may bring him. Peace also gives us perspective; it is always a blessing.

When praying for another we are actually working with his or her angel and need, therefore, to get in touch as much as possible with that angel. To bring this about we need to think first on the ideals which that other person embodies. We need to think of the highest aspirations, the best

intentions which would like to live out of the other person. We must ask the question: *who is this person, really?!* For behind everyone is a thought, an idea, an intention of God. This intention is covered over to some extent simply by the necessities of life on earth with all its compromises. If we picture another person's face and think of his or her eyes, think of the individual struggling behind those eyes, the individual and the ideals which he or she is trying to bring to life consciously or unconsciously, we are drawn close to the angelic being who guides him or her.

It is the angel of the human being who is the bearer of these higher ideals, who accompanies us at all times striving to inspire and aid us in the realization of these ideals. When we concentrate on another human being in this way we attract the attention of his or her guardian angel. This angel is then strengthened as he absorbs our thoughts of light, strength and peace which we are thinking in association with our friend in need. These three ideas are imbued with our goodwill, with our desire to help and warmth of heart. They become a spiritual substance with healing powers that can then be carried to our friend by the angel.

It is not necessary to be physically close the one for whom we pray. Yet if we do have occasional contact with the other person and if we know that a meeting is coming up we can prepare for this through prayer. This works in a very special way. For example, praying for someone before a meeting with him or her is like tilling the soil to make it receptive for seeds of new ideas or insights we may bring to the conversation. Then, after the meeting, if we pray again for light, strength and peace, this can be like the sun and rain which falls on a field after it has been planted.

In intercessory prayer we work with the angels. We work with Christ himself to help other human beings who are struggling on their paths. If we pray not for specifics, but for light, strength and peace there is no question of our interfering with the freedom or karma of a friend. We only help him to find his path, to follow that path and to have the presence of mind given by peace to recognize that he is not alone on his journey but that all of his fellow human beings are also on a path. Prayer not only helps us to help others, it also creates community.

The following prayer is from the book *Meditative Prayers for Today*, by Adam Bittleston.

*Thou angel who keeps watch
Over the destiny of . . .
Through waking and sleeping,
And the long ages of time:
May my thoughts, filled with hope,
Reach unto him (or her) through thee.
May he be strengthened
From the founts of will
Which bear us towards freedom.
May he (or she) be illumined
From the founts of wisdom
Which warm the inmost heart.
May he (or she) feel peace
From the founts of love
Which bless our work on earth.*

A Report on The Christian Community Camp

By Rev. Carol Kelly, Camp Director

"It's day, the sun with morning light wakes every living thing." So begins a day at camp, with counselors singing, children crowing and laughing and oatmeal simmering. Camp life this year was filled with adventure as we never knew just when the deluge complete with lightening and loud thunder would grace our day. But every afternoon and evening the thunder rolled, during supper, during the evening assembly, in which the story of Magellan told of raging storms at sea, or during the night, so that the campers could be lulled to sleep by the gentle sound of rain on the roofs of the tents. The campers made the best of the weather, at first making kites, felted bags, leather bookmarks and baking cookies, cookies and then more cookies!

Then when the older ones had had enough, there was a mud fight, in all sincerity! There was enough sunshine every day for swimming, boating and fishing which became very popular this year.

In the mornings we heard the story of the "Prince and the Pauper" and if there were ever "paupers" living like kings, it was our campers with a cuisine that was always a delight. A special singing group was brought together by one of our cooks, Abby Brill whose songs rang through the kitchen: "I have a million nightingales on the branches of my heart," and "There are angels hov'ring round." So the key to good cooking is naturally to sing while you're doing it! The last bonfire was a special event with the full moon and Mars rising in the east and the children and counselors singing under the canopy of stars. Then it was time for bed, on the last night of camp, from the youngest to the oldest the campers slowly left the fire. "Lay down, my sweet campers, lay down and take your rest....." It was a great camp season. See you next year! Loving thanks to all.

A Report from Two Senior Members from the Fellowship Community Retirement Home who joined the cooking Staff at our East Coast Camp

By Hildred Brown and Eleanor Chandler

On August 9, 2003 Eleanor and I left the Fellowship headed west for the Christian Community Summer Camp where we had been asked to help prepare the meals for 140 people, 100 of whom were children between the age of 9 and 13. Eleanor and I were given two beds in the infirmary. We cut vegetables and set the food out on the tables. Every day after breakfast there was an assembly, in the morning we sat looking out at the lake and at night candles were lit, one for every night at camp. There was a great deal of singing of lovely songs, especially rounds that I had never heard before. Then the children would be off to play games or do all sorts of creative crafts work with their counselors. After lunch the cooks would go for a swim. During this time the children were quiet during afternoon rest.

I was fond of taking walks in the woods. There were many paths going in different directions. One day I strayed from the path and found myself in the thick of the forest completely lost and not knowing how to find my way out. I yelled for help but no one heard me. For an hour I wandered around stumbling

over roots and rocks and tall brush. I prayed and prayed. Then finally in the distance I saw a large play field and I knew where I was! From the field I could walk back to the main lodge with mud, bruises, scratches and a story to tell!

On the last evening the older children made a huge bonfire like a wigwam in an open field. What a glorious sight it was! From where we were sitting we could see the silhouettes of the older campers surrounding the fire and lighting it with their torches. From the outer circle of children came their strong, pure singing, rising with the sparks from the fire into the dark sky above. Overhead the great dome of stars slowly appeared and added to the age-old spiritual presence at this event. It was a gorgeous ending to our stay at Christian Community Camp and a never-to-be-forgotten adventure for me.

A Report from Hawaii

By Bonnie Ozaki-James, with Bill and Genie Sakaguch

In Hawaii, where greenery and blossoms abound all year, the arrival of Spring is not always easy to discern. But this year Spring, for a small group of Christian Community members and friends in Honolulu, was joyfully signaled by the visit of a priest. We were delighted to welcome Gisela Wielki as she completed her circuit of the "outposts" of the Christian Community. For over twenty years now, the small group of Friends of the Christian Community, as we refer to ourselves, has kept alive a tiny flame of activity, sometimes with barely a glow, at others, when we have a priest visit, a sustained surge of warmth.

Over the years we have been happy to host many priests, including Rev. Richard Lewis, Rev. Verner Hegg, Rev. Robert Patterson, Rev. Erk Ludwig, Rev. John Pajunk, and Rev. Faulk-Ytter. For about seven years, in the 80s and 90s, we had regular twice-yearly visits from the Reverend Werner Grimm from Vancouver. With his guidance we built an altar, made vestments and collected other physical accoutrements for the Act of Consecration of Man. Reverend Grimm also provided us a form for conducting a lay ritual which we did monthly over many years, sharing the tasks of finding a verse, reading the Gospel and the Creed, providing music and bread and juice as we

gathered at one or another home. Unfortunately, in recent years our gatherings have dwindled to an Easter Sunrise gathering and the occasional St. John's Tide bonfire.

So it was with great joy that we welcomed Gisela at the end of March. We were grateful for a series of talks and gatherings where we experienced Gisela's warmth, humor, intensity, and spontaneity. We were glad to learn about the new seminary being founded in Chicago; and heard with interest of the groups in Tokyo, Manila, New Zealand and Australia. It was wonderful, once again, to feel the tangible connection of the world-wide work of this Movement for Religious Renewal and to be aware once more that Hawai'i is the last place on earth to celebrate the Act of Consecration of Man on a Sunday morning when the day had become dark night in Europe, and was about to be a Monday sunrise in Japan.

Aloha, From the Friends of the Christian Community in Honolulu

OUR YOUNGEST CONGREGATION IN SOUTH AMERICA

By Martin de Gans, Buenos Aires, April 29, 2003

Florianapolis ... To Argentinian and Brazilian ears this sounds like: beautiful beaches at the foot of wooded mountains, an endless number of bays and coves, islands and little islands ... and all this near the blue, clear and clean waters of the Atlantic Ocean, in the province of Santa Catarina in Southern Brazil. Hot in summer, mild during the rest of the year. By South American standards extremely prosperous, hardly any slums, university town and center of government. An ideal holiday spot!

Yet, in Florianapolis one also finds a flourishing Waldorf School, a large group of anthroposophical medical doctors working with the well-known Gudrun Burghardt with their own medical clinic, as well as a training facility for medical doctors and art therapists. For some this place is almost too beautiful to work in, but one cannot deny that there are good prospects for The Christian Community here. Seen from Argentina, it is striking that the founders of the congregation are two sisters from Uruguay, but the rest of the group as well as the families of both women are purely Brazilian.

For about ten years now Florianapolis has been visited two to three times a year from Sao Paulo. Two years ago, the South American synod decided to let the small congregation become autonomous in the near future; it was clear that there was great potential in Florianapolis but trying to develop a congregation from Sao Paulo, the nearest congregation 440 miles away, was too difficult because of the great distance. At the end of last year it was decided that Douglas Thackray, after having worked for nine years in Sao Paulo, would move to Florianapolis. This is a great undertaking for him and his wife because he is 63, an age at which one usually thinks of retirement. His wife, Sybille, is even older. Just after Christmas, after some “back and forth,” the decision was finally made, and the congregation notified that Douglas will be coming in March. It was the height of the summer holidays, people gone away, hot ... But the congregation managed to extend and transform an existing small wooden house into a simple but worthy chapel, seating more than 40. A second small rather tumbledown house on the property will be transformed for the other needed rooms, and a rented house was found for the Thackrays with their Peruvian son Federico, now 18 years old, adopted during the time that they were in Lima.

An amazing force in the congregation are the camps for children and young people, which have been held now for three years. Helped by experienced people from Sao Paulo and new people from Florianapolis itself Douglas has built up something splendid, which at the same time is greatly community building. And also an astounding source of income has appeared, exactly as in the much greater Sao Paulo congregation supplying more than 15% of the congregation’s income.

Now the coming years will show whether this “leap” has been justified. All of us are full of hope!

The Way of the West: Rise out of the Fall

By Stephanie Sugars, Santa Rosa, CA congregation

The third Christian Community Conference of the Americas gathered in July 2003 in the San Francisco Bay Area. This is the third conference of the Americas. The first was in 1995 in Kimberton, PA and titled *Prepare the Way*. The second was in 1999 in Lima, Peru and titled *Opening Roads to a New World*. The fourth is tentatively scheduled for 2007 in South America.

Over 100 participants came from Europe, North and South America and represented most of the Christian Community congregations of the Americas. Each day of the very full week began at the altar with the Act of Consecration of Man and ended with Close of Day service. The conference theme was explored in lectures, sermons, gospel readings, artistic and conversational workshops and performances. Participants lived with images and themes that included the prodigal son, sacramental consultation, the abyss, the I, freedom, peace, destiny, the will to love and the breath of God and the breath of man. On the final evening we heard the world premier of the Gospel of St. Mark (chapter 1 to the transfiguration of Christ in chapter 8:) with music by the conductor, Robin Elliott, and speech performed by Phil Wharton and the San Francisco, Santa Cruz and Santa Rosa congregations. The San Francisco, California congregation BOTH graciously organized the conference AND performed the Gospel of Mark, two heroic and widely appreciated efforts.

The artistic and conversational workshops allowed participants to digest the conference through work in tone, painting, eurythmy, sculpture, sound & color, story telling, art therapy, poetic imagery and conversation. On the final day participants of the artistic workshops shared their offerings with other conference participants — a living example of transformations that occurred during the conference. At the conference end Oliver Steinruck, the North American Lenker, gave us a final image — Though we have different languages, we have one altar in the Christian Community. We know in our thoughts that all languages are brought together in the spiritual world. May the grace of this experience move into the congregations of North and South America.

The Opening of the Seminary in Chicago September 13-14, 2003

By Gisela Wielki

*O let us build a ship for Christ's disciples,
Set sail to seek His visage through the dark –
For mankind in the cradle and the coffin
And for the blissful in the sun's bright barque.*

*The Cross her anchor, rudder – the Spirit's ray!
O brother, sister – you, to steer the way!
And guiltless or guilty, all who sail from land
Shall know the mercy of His saving hand.*

— Albert Steffen

(from Voyage to the Other Land)

One of Chicago's summer events was the arrival of the Tall Ships. It was a magnificent sight to see these majestic and graceful sailing vessels appear on the horizon. Moved by powers unseen, white sails billowing, they drew silently towards the shore in the hazy sunshine. There was a mood of joyous expectation in the people who watched them come across the big water. A few days later one could not help but accompany the sailing ships' departure with a subtle longing, the longing to come along, traveling on water, moved by the force of powers unseen.

Three students have arrived on the shores of Lake Michigan. They will have traveled far to come here, from Australia, Canada, the West coast. Together they are now a crew embarking on a voyage with the opening of the new seminary. They will each and together have to rely on their learning skills and the winds of destiny, which are always the winds of change. Some friends from as far away as Norway and South Africa and as close as Chicago accompany the students' departure with a subtle longing, for their own life situation did not yet allow them to get on board. They have voiced hope to come next year or whenever life permits them to subject themselves to the winds of change.

The weekend celebrations on September 13/14th, surrounding the historic moment of the founding of the seminary in North America, are behind us now. They represent the end of a long gestation period, as we begin work in earnest. Classes began on September 15th. Friends and

members are already signing up for the Open Courses and retreat weeks.

We do not yet have the building we hope to purchase, but expect the closing to be the end of September. It required a major leap of faith, as the owner was not willing to reduce his asking price of \$1.2 million, knowing full well its worth. Real estate is rising rapidly in the area. The fact that with the help of 390 individuals in North America and some friends from overseas we have raised \$800,000 in the last 15 months is a stunning result, met with profound gratitude. It has encouraged us to request a loan of \$600,000 from the Rudolf Steiner Foundation. We expect to make our monthly loan repayments through rental income. We intend also to build a strong pledge community in the coming year and hope for future gifts and bequests. Liquid capital for necessary renovation is tight, and we will have to find many people willing to lend a helping hand with all the needed labor. But this can in itself be a rewarding way to unite with an initiative. Anyone out there, you young and skillful carpenters and handymen who want to come to Chicago for a few days, a month or more to help with renovating - please let us know! (773- 472-7041) We need all the help we can get between November and next summer. In fact, we are looking for a building manager in return for a much-reduced studio apartment. Chicago is a great place for work, culture and leisure. The congregation is very welcoming, and the seminary promises a wealth of riches for the discovery of living Christ-community and finding Christ-vocation not only in priesthood, but in everyday life.

Gisela Wielki

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with the help of Geology, the Gospel, the Sacraments

Retreat Jan.30- Feb.1, 2004 in Wernersville, Pennsylvania

One of a series of Christian Community retreats on the four elements.

Presentations by Nadine Hafner. We will also experience the earth element through clay modelling, eurythmy, and Spatial Dynamics. Each day will begin with the act of consecration of man and end with a vesper service.

For more information please call: (610) 647-6869

THE CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY IN NORTH AMERICA AS OF SEPTEMBER, 2003

On the Web: www.thechristiancommunity.org

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(* Not now regularly visited by a priest)

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(802) 862-7001 (Or contact Taconic-Berkshire Region)

Camphill Minnesota USA Contact Chicago

Camphill Nottawasaga, Ontario CANADA
Contact Edi Holzer (705) 424-2409 (Or contact Toronto)

Chapel Hill, North Carolina USA
Contact Buddy Smiley (919) 933-5925 or Margit Gratzl
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Copake Camphill Village, New York USA
Contact Corinna Komenda (518) 329-1140 (Or Contact
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Duncan, British Columbia CANADA
Contact Michael Balcomb
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Durham Area, Ontario CANADA
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East Troy, Wisconsin USA Contact Chicago

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(808) 738-5534 (Or contact Los Angeles)

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