

THE CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY

MOVEMENT FOR RELIGIOUS RENEWAL

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Advent ~ Christmas ~ Epiphany 2001 ~ 2002



Die Mutter Gottes in der Rosenlaube by Stefan Lochner (around 1430)

*"Furrows be glad. Though earth is bare,
One more seed is planted there:
Give up your strength the seed to nourish,
That in course the flower may flourish.
People look East, and sing today;
Love, the Rose, is on the way."*

The Carol of the Advent

LOVE, THE ROSE, IS ON THE WAY

"Furrows be glad..."

At Advent the earth is bare; yet the furrows of earth can rejoice, so says the carol, because a seed, a rose seed, has already been planted in them. The furrows of earth are encouraged to offer their strength to nourish the seed, to ground it, so that it may take root, and eventually grow and blossom into a rose.

Our hearts can be like the fields in winter - seeming barren, furrowed open with suffering. Yet the suffering heart already contains in it the seed of growth. We simply need to tend it in patient endurance. The rose of love, of compassion, grows out of our heart's winter.

TO THE CONGREGATIONS OF THE CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY WORLD-WIDE

Stuttgart, September 16th, 2001

Dear Members and Friends,

Today, 16 September 2001, I am thinking of all the congregations of The Christian Community in a quite special way. On this day 79 years ago The Christian Community was founded in Switzerland as a Movement for Religious Renewal. What then is the new that we seek to express in the life of The Christian Community? Among other things, it is that people come together to lead a religious life, not because they have inherited it through birth or tradition, but because they acknowledge that it is through their own experience and insight that they choose Christ in freedom to be their helping guide.

Human beings who find each other out of this inner orientation may feel united when participating in the renewed sacraments, and particularly so in the case of the Act of Consecration of Man.

All members of our Christian Community will have shared the feelings and the sufferings experienced after the terrible event that took place in America on 11 Sep-

tember. That is because Christ, Love's Rose, has already placed himself as a seed into the earth, and into the ground of our hearts. We need only offer him our enduring strength, and in time he will blossom in our hearts.

Roses of course come with thorns. Before Christ fully blossoms into manhood, the thorns of Herod's fear and envy will cause the death of innocent children and the rending of parents' hearts. The furrowed fields of suffering are watered with tears.

The bare furrows of Advent, the stirring seed of Christmas, the thorns of Epiphany, each is a step along the way toward the full blossoming of the Rose of Love at Easter, once in history, eternally within the earth and ever again in our hearts.

Cynthia Hindes, *Los Angeles*

tember. The helping thoughts and prayers that have been offered out of grief, of fear and of distress, from all over the world in respect of the sacrifices brought about by this inhuman act are often accompanied by a lack of comprehension and by anger. And indeed, the very real question can arise in us: what can we ourselves bring to bear on this situation to counteract this terrible deed?

To find an answer to this question, it is helpful to call to mind the commandment which Christ entrusted to us. In John 15:17 we read, 'This is my commandment, that you love one another'. This surely embraces all human beings. The commandment is easily heard, but in the face of the inhuman events in the USA it is less easily fulfilled. Human qualities such as faith, love, hope, which as human beings we can only strive for out of insight and freedom, can forge a path towards this surely exalted and yet difficult to realize commandment. Albeit, we can hardly achieve anything unless we turn to the divine-spiritual powers that would help us.

Francis of Assisi, who died in 1226, left a prayer for peace which even now today can point the direction we can take on this path. In the words of the prayer: '... that I can bring love where hate rules, bring faith where doubt lives, bring hope where there is despair...' Prayers have the power! The greatest and most all-embracing prayer is the Lord's Prayer, which we can pray at the

altar and also personally at all times and in all places. When we pray it, not just out of habit but out of our own free conviction, with the inner attitude that His will is more important than my will, we then reach a level on which the divine spiritual powers can work effectively. For they work with 'His will'. And when the forces of prayer that arise in this way stream together for the many who have died and for the living who are in need, they will, with this help, bring light into their darkness and warmth into their paralysed life. May we also think of those who deliberately destroyed their own lives to bring about this terrible catastrophe. They have thereby cast themselves into an unimaginable, deep disaster.

At Advent we hear the words of the Gospel, which describe how the lack of a way out for human souls, how stressful need, inner turmoil and fear rule the world.

But we also hear, 'When all this takes place, they will see the Son of Man, coming in the realm of the clouds' (Luke 21:27) The turmoil, need and fear could be truly experienced on 11 September. But in the face of this tribulation some human beings in New York were able, in addition to the incomprehensible, to experience that He, who had also promised to be with us today, is indeed near and would accompany us on our life's ways.

Then we may surely say with Paul (1 Cor 13:13) that faith, love and hope when we cultivate them - can create a counter-substance to prevent retaliation, revenge and hate from being victorious.

The new which since the beginning of Christianity has come into the world must become even newer through human beings - because Christ in us and with us wishes to lead His work onwards.

Wherever we are on the earth, the events of 11 September in the USA concern us all and call us, each individual one of us, to become truly human and truly Christian.

Greetings you all in this earnest time: may we have courage and strength!

Taco Bay

SEPTEMBER 11th

Many speak of their first impressions.
I have none.

I was working in a windowless basement and someone said: What a joke, a plane has landed on top of the World Trade Center. What could I know in a windowless basement, as if seeing is believing, but I work with the blind and no one believed what they saw.

Later I wandered the streets trying to witness what had come undone and too much in shock to realize that it had. Only in sleep would I allow the truth to enter and wake everyday with the thought - so many dead.

To see the land from the water was to gasp in awe. How could a tiny spit of land carry all that weight.

The weight of building upon building would seem to sink it into the sea. But somehow the biggest and tallest elevated all the others, raised them up and held them suspended between earth and sky. The audaciousness more than the folly left you breathless.

The buildings were for trade, transactions of global importance rained on me like tears. It must be real: I hold in my hand a scorched paper that says - void in times of disaster -

Now I want to enact a trade with those who still inhabit its spaces, who ride the air like stairs ascending and descending. And it is a brazen proposal because times like these call for bold acts and no holding back. For time isn't what we control, a minute lasts a lifetime and a lifetime disappears in a snapshot. It is a steep price, but fair for I know the worth of what is offered. Sometimes, by grace, it is given away but who would lay claim to divine intervention? To the dead I say:

Give me your joy
I pledge to thee my love and devotion.

Madelon Holder, *New York City*

THAT SEPTEMBER DAY

By noon on that September day, I tried to bring myself to a full consciousness of what I had witnessed. Trying to shake the dream-like terror of the morning experience, I looked over the City skyline from the roof of my office building. I was enraptured by a mysterious silence, a silence not unlike a winter blizzard. The sky above midtown was so deep a blue it felt as if the outer limits of space had descended to the earth.

The atmosphere seemed thinner somehow, the birds had roosted, not one in flight to be seen around the skyline. Sounds of cars, buses, and sirens were not heard. On Broadway, people streamed northward from downtown. Ash covered, eyes shot with blood and tears, they walked in silence to unknown destinations. A supernatural silence fell upon New York City.

The entire southern sky was engulfed with violent billows of black smoke and ash streaming skyward spewing from the earth. The autumn noon sun shone an extraordinary light from above into the blackness. The light, reflecting its rays from the dragon's breath of pulverized concrete, twinkled like descending Beings. The quieting of nature with the unique celestial light gave the impression of a solar eclipse, however, this day the sun was shadowed by earthly matter.

Matthew Owens,
Spring Valley, NY

AT THE ALTAR

Let us contemplate today on the movement of the book upon the altar during The Act of Consecration of Man.

We could think of the altar as a table. A table is a place where we take in food which is then transformed by spirit working into the nourishment which sustains our body. No man has the ability to turn an apple into red blood corpuscles. Therefore we can easily understand that we have higher help in achiev-

ing this.

The altar is no ordinary table. Evelyn Frances Capel, a priest in The Christian Community, says: "The altar is the threshold between two worlds, the world of spirit and that of the earth" (in her *The Seven Sacraments*). It is made a sacred place each time we bring the Act of Consecration to it. As Christ looked at evil and spoke it away ("Leave this man"), so our actions and words speak evil away from this small space.

We begin by lighting seven candles. Why seven? The Book of Revelation tells us that the seven lamp stands signify the seven congregations which John worked with in the beginning to spread knowledge of Christ on earth. By rekindling the flames of these candles at the beginning of each service, we invoke again the ongoing work and support of those who came before us.

When the priest and servers enter the chapel, the server on the right is carrying "the book". Actually two books: the bible and the service book out of which the Act of Consecration of Man is read. It is not the book itself which is important, its pages and cover, but the contents. We should think then, not of the book but of what it symbolizes - the Word. The word moves upon the altar through the four parts of the service in a very important way.

It is first placed on the *outer right* side for the reading of the Epistle. Evelyn Capel describes the right side of the altar as the "active" or "giving" side. The words read on this side ask us to *work* - with inner wakefulness, with conscious awareness, with spiritual gestures of "doing something". It is no surprise then, that the invoking of, the calling to the service happens on the right. Also on the right we hear the Offertory, the offering of each individual person and of the community as a whole, to the active work of Christ.

Perhaps surprisingly, the communion itself, the (quote) "receiving of bread and wine", takes place on the right. It is of spiritual significance that the receiving of communion transforms us into the activity it can bring to bear in us: that we consciously and of our own free choice take up Christ-like principles in our lives - in our inner work and in our work

in the world.

The left side of the altar represents the "receptive" or more "passive" side of the word. The first words spoken here are the Word of God, the Gospel. We know immediately, then, that the left side of the altar is no less important than the right side! The Gospel, sermon and Creed are all spoken on this side in the first of the four parts of the service. Since the entire service challenges us to waken our inner self, the hearing of the gospel is anything but passive. It is rather "receptive".

It is something we "take in" rather than something we "do". From the left side of the altar we also hear the words of Transubstantiation - the changing of the substances of grape juice and bread into more spiritual substances which can bring transubstantiation (changing of substance) within our own physical being. Naturally, no human being can perform this task of transubstantiation. Therefore we "receive it" from the left side of the altar.

Now here is amazing phenomenon. We receive this blessing as a response from the spiritual world to our own offering! It works on the altar in a wonderful and powerful way. The reading of the Creed ends the first part of the service. The word is then moved to the *outer right* corner of the altar again for the beginning of the second part, the Offertory. During this part, the right server moves the word for the first time to the *inner right* (middle portion) of the altar. This happens *as we offer ourselves*. In ancient times, man brought animals as offerings. Today we bring our very selves. The priest takes the grape juice and water, combines them, and faces the altar again. This symbol of bringing the offering is done not *for* the community, but *by* the community. The movement of the word closer to the center of the altar, closer to our heart, is a turning point in the service which can bring a higher level of inner awareness. It can be the beginning of the great task of the altar - to be the door between the physical and the spiritual worlds. As a response to our active gesture of offering, the spirit world begins the work of transformation. The word is moved to the *inner left* portion of the altar for the third part of the service, the Transubstantiation.

So far, then, we have three parts: the Gospel, the Offertory and the Transubstantiation. (They are separated by music if you care to take note of this.) For the last part, the Communion, the book is again moved to the *inner right*. Actively we receive these now consecrated substances. By doing this over and over again, we come to realize that The Act of Consecration of Man brings a kind of support and change to our lives that we cannot explain, weigh or measure. We cannot put it into words, but we feel the results. We begin to understand that active participation in this service brings benefit not only to our own life, but to others and indeed to the earth itself. It brings the healing power of love. It sustains our connection with those who have passed through the gate of death. Over time, we come to this service for reasons far beyond ourselves. The movement of the word may move us to offer ourselves in freedom to the work of Christ

Margaret Shipman
Los Angeles

CENTRAL FUND AND TRUSTEES CONFERENCE

October 11-13, 2001

IMAGINE: a landscape of endlessly rolling tree-covered hills at the height of their autumnal glory, flaming up at the touch of the morning sun into brilliant yellows and breathtaking reds against the intermixed and somber background of late-summer dark greens and earthen browns and grays. On three crisp mornings from Thursday to Sunday, half-hour drives from the homes of widely scattered but warmly hospitable hosts brought many of us 30 or so Central Fund members and delegates from the Boards of Trustees of all 12 North American Christian Community congregations, as well as a handful of their priests, through this color-drenched world to the country chapel of the Taconic Berkshire Congregation, near Hillsdale in upstate New York.

From the paved road winding through the surrounding hills, one turns into the churchyard proper at a small wooden sign with characteristic angles and red lettering. A short gravel road leads into a sort of

elevated flood plain; a small river actually does run through the woods somewhat far off to the left, and in front of these woods stand two new houses belonging to the Bensons and the Hasses, respectively, who thus have only a short walk to their church across the gravel road. The church itself, to the right, is plain and white; its tiny entry hall/cloakroom leads directly back into the small, simple chapel. To the left of the church, surrounded by a large back yard and several trees of moderate size, is a one-storey house with kitchen, guest room, large screened-in back porch, two baths, and a large hall for meeting, dining, and displaying such things as Christian Community literature and paintings by Laura Summer that explore the question of the face in an altar painting.

The legally required Annual General Meeting of the Central Fund was actually not held until the third day of the conference. At this session we re-elected Rev. Arie Boogert to Central Fund membership for an additional three-year term and discussed various financial matters of the Fund, such as the sources, uses, and accounting of the Fund monies themselves. Otherwise, the two main agenda items of the conference were: (1) to carry forward the work of creating a North American Regional Council (an idea which had emerged from the 2000 Annual General Meeting and Conference held in Chicago in conjunction with the Circle of Priests in North America and Dr. Christoph Heyde from Germany, one of the seven members of our central leadership), and (2) to be apprised of the current status of plans for the new Seminary in Chicago, scheduled to open in the fall of 2003.

Long and complex discussions took place on the first of these topics. Certain delegates were concerned that a Regional Council could threaten the autonomy of local congregations. Others pointed out that the Christian Community in North America currently has no organ for considering general questions about the future growth and direction of the church here other than strictly financial ones (handled by the Central Fund) or sacramental ones (handled by the Circle of Priests). By the end of the third day we had all gone through a certain growth process. Initial opposition to a Regional Council structure of some sort, imposed by a commission (however well meaning) from with-

out, had given way somewhat to the common activity of considering the establishment of the new Seminary and the role the various congregations would need to play in working toward this goal. As a group, we were beginning to feel that we were not just delegates to a Central Fund meeting, but nascent members of such a Council and true trustees of our individual congregations, representing their interests within the whole being of The Christian Community in North America.

The conference was surprisingly tightly scheduled and run. In all, there were 12 working sessions of various sorts, including plenary discussion sessions, small group meetings, reports on the work of these small groups, and two sessions for reports from individual congregations. But breathing time was also set aside for two stimulating painting sessions with Laura Summer and an extended, refreshing nature walk through fields, spectacular woods, and a small herd of very curious cows! Each day began with a scrumptious breakfast, followed by The Act of Consecration of Man. A steady stream of fine meals and snacks by Fiona Sommer de Ris and her staff kept us all happy. The first two days ended with a brief Close of Day service at the altar, and the Saturday evening closed with a rich and memorable concert in the chapel by Dorothy Haller, piano, and Paul Hasse, clarinet, to a packed house of many community people besides ourselves.

Perhaps the most moving event of all was the Friday evening account by Rev. Erk Ludwig of his experience of the tragic events of September 11 in New York City. He related that at the very moment the planes were attacking the buildings he was celebrating The Act of Consecration, without knowing what was happening outside, of course. Afterwards, he went out to see what he could and observed people walking INTO the opaque clouds of dust to do whatever they could to confront the effects of the evil within them - a truly Michaelic deed. We will carry this central image in our hearts.

Burley Channer
Lambertville, MI (Detroit Center)

INTRODUCING EUGENE

In our Easter issue the Eugene, OR, Confirmation somehow disappeared from this year's List of Confirmations. And to make matters worse, in the List of Congregations and Affiliates its phone number was wrong! That has in the meantime been corrected in the Michaelmas issue: Jo Forkish at (541) 686-3204.

We can't just let such things happen; so here Oregon presents itself, complete with this year's confirmation!

THE CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY IN EUGENE

What does it mean to seek religious renewal from afar, living in a town with a thriving Waldorf school and Anthroposophical study groups but without a resident Christian Community priest? In Eugene, Oregon, we have kindled the flickering flame - the light of human beings - for twenty years now through ad-hoc religious instruction, lay devotional services and the occasional - and thus very special - sacrament. In doing so, we have learned to receive the gifts of the spirit with gratitude. For when our small circle studies each week's Gospel reading, we know we are living in the same words and thoughts as our more established sister congregations in Sacramento, Vancouver and the rest of the world. And no community could possibly be more grateful for priestly presence: first from Sacramento, now from Vancouver. Over the years the Reverends Verner Hegg, Richard Lewis, Everett Moraine, Robert Patterson and now Michael Kientzler have given generously of themselves - despite countless competing demands - to make The Act of Consecration of Man and other sacraments available to those of us who seek them.

The year 2001 marks twenty years of Christian Community presence in Eugene. Admittedly, this presence was infrequent in the early years, with only a handful of visits by Verner Hegg and Richard Lewis for baptisms and a funeral. But it was not until 1993, when he was invited to celebrate a marriage ceremony, that Rev. Moraine led our first Act of Consecration of Man and Children's Service.

It was an unseasonably warm October morning, and the stuffy Waldorf classroom was packed with many curious parents as well as those who were anxiously seeking religious renewal. Thanks to the efforts of two new parents and a new teacher, all experienced servers, we truly began to have Christian Community in Eugene. Within the next month, we celebrated another wedding and began two Confirmation classes.

Everett Moraine returned three or four times each year to celebrate the sacraments and to mentor the local parent who was teaching Confirmation classes. Each time, we reverently transformed the school's beautiful eurythmy room into our very own Christian Community chapel. Our first group of four students was confirmed in Sacramento in the spring of 1994. The following year, Rev. Patterson confirmed four more students in Eugene. We continued to have an occasional visit from Rev. Moraine, though it was often difficult for him to find time in his already busy travel schedule.

Five years ago, an impulse arose to keep the spirit of religious renewal alive between our infrequent priest visits. On the advice of Rev. Sanford Miller, we began a Sunday morning devotional service and Gospel study group. Rev. Moraine continued to visit when he could, celebrating many baptisms and a funeral, as well as meeting with Confirmands and parents. In 1999, five students participated in a confirmation retreat in Sacramento and were confirmed that spring in Eugene.

Last year, we said a fond goodbye to Rev. Moraine, as he celebrated his final Act of Consecration in Eugene before leaving for Scotland. In spite of the distance, he had become a good friend and counselor to many of us. However, we were extremely grateful that Michael Kientzler of Vancouver made himself available last fall. We were blessed with four visits this past year, including several public lecture/discussions that were enthusiastically received by the wider community. This spring, Rev. Kientzler celebrated several baptisms and then, on a beautiful Mothers' Day Sunday, celebrated the confirmation of six students, our largest group ever - and a very lively one, too! As we have often done after special

Christian Community events, we shared our sense of spirit over a potluck meal.

In Eugene, as elsewhere, our lives are busy and distractions are manifold. But we rarely fail to attend to the needs of our children, as we perceive them. Although our core group is small, our numbers swell for baptisms and confirmations. As is the case with many Waldorf parents, we often find that we must strive against inertia, doubt and modern cynicism to provide our children with the strength and spiritual resources they will need in our troubled, materialistic age. And so it is as much for our children as ourselves that we seek religious renewal in Eugene.

We are physically remote from either Vancouver or Sacramento, but we feel close to these communities who have so generously shared their priests. Our services are sometimes hastily arranged to fit the priest's schedule, and he must bring almost everything needed for the services with him, as we possess only a beautiful altar picture painted for us years ago by Alison Hegg. The situation is often chaotic, with room scheduling conflicts, missing vestments and inexperienced servers who need to be retrained each time. Pieces of our collapsible altar have even mysteriously disappeared on occasion. But when a priest comes to Eugene to celebrate The Act of Consecration of Man, as many as 50 people attend, with some driving from Corvallis, Salem and even Portland. For this we are grateful.

"Where two or more are gathered in my name, there I shall be also." The Christian Community impulse lives in Eugene, but by necessity in a different form than is experienced in Sacramento or Vancouver. While we regret the absence of regular ritual and especially of the sacraments, we are nonetheless thankful to experience religious renewal and our own sense of Community - among ourselves, and within the fullness of The Christian Community.

Jo and Robbie Forkish
Eugene, Oregon

IMPRESSIONS of the Seminary in Stuttgart during a three-week course for young Americans in June, 2001

The sun rises early in Stuttgart. Unencumbered by the horizon it suddenly soars upward from behind the rolling mountains which envelop the city, a magenta disk casting its rosy light across the sea of terracotta roofs.

The sky becomes light even earlier, which made it easier to wake up for the daily Act of Consecration of Man at 7:15 am than it might have been otherwise, especially with jet lag. Going to the service was optional, but I thought I would go just to see what it would be like to experience the Act of Consecration of Man every day for awhile. It was a rare opportunity and was an entirely different experience from going once a week or less. I found that the whole trip would have been worth it for this alone.

Life at the Seminary was very orderly and thoughtful in its details. The place was generally very quiet. However, at particular times of day the monkish silence would explode into loud and bristling activity, such as at breakfast and clean-up after breakfast, and during wood carving. These moments of "scheduled" loudness had their place in the very flowing and regular rhythm of the day. The consistent schedule was one of the most restful and comforting aspects of the Seminary. There were some exceptions for those of us visiting because of excursions, and fitting in extra meetings and gospel studies, as well as eurythmy and Bothmer gymnastics.

Our group was very fortunate to be able to experience both classes in eurythmy and Bothmer gymnastics (two lessons per week). The two classes complemented one another extremely well. Things we did in one shed light on what we experienced in the other. Both brought alive subjects we studied in the morning course (Sacred Architecture, Biography, Cosmology). For example, there was something profound about working with the gestures for the zodiac and the planets in eurythmy class after having studied Cosmology in the morning lecture.

Woodcarving was a great way to really wake up in the afternoon as everyone pounded their chisels

with their mallets and caused forms to appear from beneath the flying wood chips. This provided a wonderful will activity that really anchored our days during the three weeks. I hope similar trips are made possible for Americans and for others in the English speaking world. Even for those who are not thinking of becoming priests themselves, such a trip gives young people an opportunity to develop a more profound connection to the Christian Community and a deeper commitment to it.

Theresa Milligan
Canada

THE HAMBURG SEMINARY

As a kind of birthday present at the beginning of the 80th year in the life of The Christian Community, this September 16th, 2001, the Hamburg Seminary opened its doors to its first 27 students with a festive celebration. This Seminary, the second after Stuttgart, is located not far from the Inner Alster, that beautiful inner city lake, and just around the corner from the church of the first Hamburg congregation in the Johnsallee. This church is the mother of all our Hamburg churches, out of which during the last forty years four other Hamburg congregations have grown, together with some other offshoots.

Arie Boogert

CHICAGO SEMINARY UPDATE

The initiative is progressing. By Christmas all members and friends should have received in the mail the informative brochure regarding the beginning of the seminary in Chicago in the fall of 2003. If you did not receive the brochure, please contact your local priest. This brochure will also be sent to all congregations world-wide.

In order to broaden the base of participation in the founding phase, groups of members and friends are forming on the East and West coast and in the Midwest.

Steps have to be taken now to form a legal board.

Fund raising needs to get under way, first nationally and then internationally. Already a substantial, anonymous gift has come from Holland. A donation from Princeton, N.J., has paid for the brochure's design, printing and mailing. Such unexpected gifts are heartening.

Gisela Wielki

LAYING THE FOUNDATION STONE IN SPRING VALLEY



It was a quintessential Michaelmas morning, September 29: the wind tossed the leaves in swirls, the sun appeared from time to time through the clouds. The tones of a trumpet announced the beginning of the Foundation Stone Ceremony for the Christian Community church in Spring Valley, New York, as young children of the congregation, holding autumn colored banners aloft, led the crowd to the steel-beamed vault of the future chapel. Those assembled represented members of the Spring Valley congregation, friends of the congregation and visitors from other Christian Communities in the Northeast. In all presentations there was an enthusiastic gesture of welcome to the new church; a student chamber group played; the assembled sang together, several shared verses; there was a presentation of the copper foundation stone vessel which had been made by Paul Soodak, recent graduate of Green Meadow Waldorf School. Into the copper vessel, a pentagon-dodecahedron, were placed the plans of the church by the architect Michael Scharff, verses which had been of-

ferred that day and twelve gems which represented the twelve precious stones in the foundation of the New Jerusalem, and virtues to be striven for. It was a morning whose sense experiences of sound and sight were enhanced by the mood of quiet expectation and anticipation of the day when the church would be realized not only in the spirit but also in matter.

Monica Alexandra and Kay Hoffman
Spring Valley, NY

OUR CHURCH STANDS



NOW FOR THE INTERIOR

Richmond Hill is one of the fastest growing communities in Canada, which means that acres of farmland are being sold to and gobbled up by developers. The bulldozers move in, flatten the whole parcel of ground and soon we have a forest of cookie cutter houses instead of rolling fields and groups of trees. On Rutherford Road there is a mix of old and new, and still a fair amount of open land to be seen, for the moment at any rate.

Approaching from east to west, you come upon a freshly flattened parcel of land, then a treed ravine, and then something quite new and different appears - our wonderful new church. The eye receives a kind of jolt, because suddenly there's this magnificent structure - larger than many of us imagined it from the sketches and drawings. It stands proudly, a spiritual statement achieved with concrete and wood,



along with more modern building materials. Something draws you to it. Your interest is sparked. This was illustrated a few Sundays ago when my husband came upon an exploring young couple who were looking for a church in the area and were interested to see what this was all about. The outer construction is now complete: the windows, with their beautiful frames made of fir and washed with a red stain, are in; the roof is covered with its gray, scalloped shingles, and the walls are stuccoed the colour of ripe wheat. Almost unbelievable. To see the sketches and plans and imagine what a building will be like, that is one thing. To see it standing there in reality is another, a real "wow". Jan Wintjes, our project manager, reacts modestly when complimented on his achievement. "Ah well, that's all of us... working together." He told me how useful architect Hinrich Witt's recent visit had been. I could only imagine the thrill he must have experienced, although he did instigate some adjustments. With his sensitive eye he could discern such things as "a bit of a weak angle there". The task of marking out the intricate ceiling line of the chapel took many hours, but is now done, and the framework is in place. Thus the work has begun on finishing the interior. Mr Witt commented on the different construction methods used in Canada, and said that to build a comparable building in Germany would have cost twice as much.

In a recent fund-raising letter, Robert Massoud wrote: "From initial preparation of the grounds, to excavations, foundation, etc., I have been captivated by the process of creating something of beauty, truth and meaning. In all that time I struggled with what the building meant to me. Why did it look the way it

did and what was it intended to be? It took the skeleton of the roof on the chapel to be enclosed by plywood boards for the picture of a ship to appear... Perhaps I saw the picture that the architect intended to convey - a vessel in which to carry people to new places. It is, of course, a spiritual ship, a ship that leaves us rooted in the same physical spot but helps to transport us to realms beyond." If you believe, as I do, that what our eye rests on and takes in in the way of man made structures has a moral effect on the soul, then I can only say that this building is powerful, uplifting and enlightening. I can assure you that it's well worth a trip to Toronto, not only to see, but to experience for yourself.

Brenda Hammond,
Toronto

CHURCH BUILDING PLANS IN SOUTH AMERICA

In our 2000-2001 Advent through Epiphany issue, Martin de Gans described church building plans in Cali (Colombia). In our next Passiontide-Whitsun issue, we were able to report that a donor had made up the missing \$600 to the 2,500 dollars which the Buenos Aires raffle had been intended to raise for this project. Our Michaelmas issue mentioned that the Council of The Christian Community (Foundation International) early this summer had sent out a German language appeal to raise funds for the church building projects in Cali and in Botocatu (Brazil).

The first bio-dynamic farm in Brazil has existed for more than 20 years in Botocatu, which is located 150 miles from Sao Paulo with its 18 million inhabitants. Other initiatives joined; for instance a Waldorf School with now 300 students. A Study House offering courses is visited by farmers from all over Brazil as well as, for instance, by people interested in Waldorf. Since 1994 an affiliate Christian Community congregation has grown, many young families settling here, as well as a number of our older Sao Paulo members, among them the founders of that congregation.

Now, Martin de Gans writes:

"In the meantime it has become clear that the international appeal, to help fund church building projects in Cali and Botocatu, has brought significantly less than was hoped. This is why the South American synod, meeting in Lima (Peru), has decided to concentrate all forces on building the church in Cali, and to let Botocatu wait for a while.

We expect that next year, with Renato Gomes beginning to work in Botocatu (a Brazilian at the moment working in Buenos Aires), sufficient energy will be released there to make building a church possible by local means. Remarkably, this year already a home for Renato's family has been donated! Botocatu not quite being a metropolis, the argument applying strongly to Cali will not be of such importance: that we need a building 'representing us to the world and creating peace and quiet inside'.

In Cali, in the meantime, something extraordinary has happened. As the congregation had finished its preparations for building, being convinced that we were able to begin now, in July quite unexpectedly it turned out that the town of Cali had changed its zoning plans to such an extent, that we would not be allowed to build a church on our present property (situated in the middle of the coming center of Greater Cali).

Undauntedly, our architect, community member Enrique Castro, began to investigate what could be done in this situation. Referred to a municipal commission of architects having the last word in such decisions, asking the chairman for an audience, his request was not received in exactly a friendly way. Not very promising!

The meeting being scheduled for a Tuesday, the preceding Sunday the community met on the occasion of the regular priest visit from Lima. A seven year old girl, having heard from a friend that the Sunday Service for Children was going to be held, absolutely wanted to go. Her parents, unfamiliar with The Christian Community, tried to avoid this by promising: 'When you wake up early enough Sunday, you may wake us and we will go together...'

That Sunday, she woke her parents at seven, and they kept their promise. Being very impressed by

the Service for Children, they decided to stay for the Act of Consecration. Afterwards, they spoke with Enrique, our architect. It turned out that the girl's father had been the chairman of the commission's professor of architecture! Directly, he did all he could to smooth the way for us...

December this year, the final decision will be made, and we all are hopeful that things will even out for the best. In that case, our church will figure on all official town maps, as it will be part of the zoning plan."

Martin de Gans
Buenos Aires

A story which will sound not unfamiliar to folks in Spring Valley and Toronto, even when the Cali circumstances are so extraordinary!

CONFERENCES

"9-11", EAST COAST YOUTH CONFERENCE

Conference for Teenagers, December 27-30, 2001. Theme: "9-11" What is the Call? - What is the Response? Where do we go from Ground Zero? Deadline for registration: December 15. For further information, call Rev. Erk Ludwig at (212) 877-3577.

MY SHADOW MY SELF, CONFERENCE FOR YOUNG PEOPLE

A Conference organized by Young People for Young People, 18-28 years old, January 2-5, 2002, at Fairview Lake YMCA Camp in New Jersey. Sponsored by The Christian Community. Participating priests are Richard Dancey and Gisela Wielki. Cost: \$125.-, meals included. For more information contact Sara Parrilli, e-mail: herzigelf@aol.com, or Rev. Gisela Wielki at (212) 362-7204.

ALTAR PICTURE CONFERENCE IN NORTH AMERICA?

What shines down on us from above the altar candles is Christ's countenance. Many artists have tried to paint a face that would resemble the Risen Christ. Many have come quite close... yet it is and should remain an ongoing striving towards ever greater closeness. In 2000, Laura Summer from Hillsdale, NY, and I from Detroit, MI, attended an altar picture conference for artists and priests in Pforzheim, Germany, organized by Rev. Norbert Schaaf. About fifteen individuals spent a week together sketching, painting and evaluating the results of our efforts.

Now Laura and I would like to know whether we could have a North American Altar Picture Conference, possibly right in her spacious studio. A request to every congregation: Let us know, even before Christmas, who would like to or could or even should attend such a conference. Name other possible locations and make suggestions with regard to time of year. Once such information is available, we could consider setting place and time. Laura Summer: 518-672-7302 and Hartmut Junge: 313-823-5315

NORTH-SOUTH CONFERENCE OF THE AMERICAS

Regrettably, this conference can not take place in July 2002, as no location was found to be available. We will meet in 2003, and soon hope to be able to give more information.

Please send letters and literary contributions to Arie Boogert, 20 Lake Street, Arlington, MA 02474-8526, Phone/Fax (781) 646-4644 (E-mail: arieboogert@hotmail.com). **Due date for the next issue is January 28, 2002.**