



**THE CHRISTIAN
COMMUNITY**
MOVEMENT FOR RELIGIOUS RENEWAL

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North American Newsletter

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One Small Flame



In the darkness of late afternoon, children gather in the school gymnasium for the Advent garden. As the light fades and shadows gather, one candle is lit in the center of the room — one small flame in the darkness of the vast gymnasium. And yet this small light is powerful enough to change the dark. The shadows retreat to the corners of the room and color appears; the whole space is bathed in shades of purples and brown, a twilight, where moments before there was only gray. It is hard to imagine that such a small flame could permeate and transform such a great area of darkness, but it is so.

In our world, there is much darkness. But there is also the light of love. Every day we choose what we put into the world; we can spread light and love, or we can sow darkness. This choice is made in every word we speak and in every action we make. We must not forget that even a small act of kindness can spread much light and warmth, and create more change than we can imagine.

And when we consciously choose to act out of love, something shifts within us as well. It is as if the same small flame that we placed out in the world begins to shine within our heart. Day by day, our striving and our love work a slow but steady transformation. A place of warmth, of receptivity is created within — a place of openness that is love inclined.

For we are not alone. A greater Love approaches the earth day by day on the path from Advent to Christmas. The light of the Christ child, the light of the Higher Self approaches our hearts, seeking a place of warmth, a home in which to unfold and become. Through our striving in the world, we have come to trust in the power of the small and steady flame. May we now be ready to welcome the source from which it came.

Rev. Lisa Hildreth

Photo Credit: Fresco of the Madonna from Cordoba Cathedral, Spain. Image licensed from Sami Sarkis.

The Seminary - Open and Closed

Usually the courses and lessons of the Seminary of the Christian Community in North America take place behind closed doors. The students need the quiet and concentration that allows them to fully take in the program offered. Now that we have students in the first and second year, the new students notice that the program for the second year is more intense than at the beginning of their study. A year ago, when we had a student who was in the final stage before priest ordination, this intensity and earnestness was even more tangible. In short, we have to develop priestly skills in an environment that has something of the qualities of a cloister: behind closed doors.

However, three times each semester we open our doors for guests. When they arrive, the whole atmosphere of the Seminary changes and there is a lively interaction between students and guests. Coming from all over North America, some of these visitors get to know other congregations and affiliates through the eyes and experiences of other guests. Initiatives for the future are born out of these contacts — like the Open Course this fall where members from different affiliates came together to think about the future of these affiliates. Over time, interesting and far-reaching contacts are built between students and regular guests. Some of them even developed the qualities of Godparents, who follow the developments of ‘their’ students!

Apart from these interesting and heart-warming contacts, our guests usually leave after a week with new inspiration for their personal life and for the work in their congregations. I begin to realize that these Open Courses are at the moment the only platform where members of different congregations can meet regularly during the year.

Our last Open Course, from November 30 through December 4, focused on the theme: *Anthroposophy and the Christian Community: Different Ways to the Same Goal?* This theme was somehow ‘in the air’ — at the same time it was discussed at the local anthroposophical branch and on Facebook. For our students, it is absolutely necessary to get clarity about the differences between these two movements. But at the same time, these two are constantly present at the priest training; the Seminary itself IS a meeting place where the two movements work intensively together. Without the help of anthroposophically trained teachers (for example speech, eurythmy, spacial dynamics) we would not be able to prepare students for priesthood. Several of the students will not continue on this path toward ordination. But all of them, even if they leave the Seminary after a year, express their gratitude for the opportunity to meet the Christian Community and Anthroposophy in such a way that they can work with these contents and methods later in life, in whatever profession they stand.

As you can read between the lines, the Seminary offers during the first year of study the opportunity to get to know the Christian Community; one can enroll without intending to become a priest. Study-topics include the Old and New Testament and the Greek language; the nature of the seven Sacraments; Anthroposophy and its theory of knowledge; and the arts, including eurythmy and speech-formation. For those who want to apply or wish to register for an Open Course, see the seminary website: www.christiancommunityseminary.org

Rev. Bastiaan Baan
Seminary Director

Building New Christian Communities: Pioneering in Florida and Oregon

Rev. John Pajunk describes recent Christian Community Events in Miami:

Teri and I moved to Miami in June, 2015. Soon after our arrival we started with a workshop. Teri offered meditative singing and I offered meditation based on Christian tradition and modern scientific research. There were about 25 people attending. The workshop was well prepared by some friends of the Christian Community. Finding a room where we can meet is always a challenge. We usually meet in a private home.

We do not have yet any equipment for the Act of Consecration of Man. When Rev. Oliver Steinrueck visited he had to bring almost everything with him. We are now starting to collect all the items we need and to sew the vestments for the servers. We would be grateful for any contributions as we now collect all the vestments and equipment.

We are now able to celebrate the Act of Consecration and the Service for the Children once a month for one year and then it will be decided if we can go on this way. I offer a study group every Wednesday morning mostly for Waldorf parents and a study and prayer group Monday night.

Teri works in the Sunrise Waldorf school in Miami as a singing teacher and we both were asked to teach at the foundation studies for Waldorf parents. Teri will teach Anthroposophy through singing and I will offer meditation based on the teachings of Rudolf Steiner.

We are still in a pioneering, but promising and interesting situation.

The Christian Community in Oregon: Small Endeavors Earnestly Built Grow:

What began as one visit from Rev. Sanford Miller to Eugene in 2006 has developed. We snagged Rev. Craig Wiggins when he was in Portland for a singing workshop, asking him to lead a gospel study between songs, in 2013. Rev. Susan Locey travels south from Vancouver, BC to bring the sacraments to Seattle. The care of priests reaches out to other places in Oregon when requested.

When I think of the Christian Community in Oregon, I think of a small rivulet, making its way toward a clear stream. A meandering wash of water that appears and then goes away. This simple streamlet is making a channel and preparing for a more steady supply of water. I feel like a prospector, who knows there is a deep spring nearby. Perhaps the water will bubble up and feed this rivulet and help it to grow into a mighty river. It will



depend on more than just one prospector. Perhaps that would be when more of us stop buying bottled water and seek more earnestly for living water.

The Christian Community in Oregon has two homes — this is one of the advantages of an affiliate. We don't have to have just one church. We have regular priest visits to Eugene and Portland. Sanford makes the trek to both cities twice a year and Craig now also comes north twice to both cities. That is four times a year, each, twice to Portland and twice to Eugene. They put up with a lot of unusual situations in order to bring the sacraments to this outpost. I often think of the section of Alfred Heidenreich's book *Growing Point* where writes of taking everything needed to celebrate the Act of Consecration of Man in a basket and getting help to carry the gear to the distant location for the Sunday services. We have more like a van load: with boxes, pieces of wood for the altar, an altar painting and flowers.

Both priests also give lectures and a gospel study during their visits. The Sacrament of Consultation sometimes keeps Sanford so busy that he is glad to get a rest when he returns to Sacramento. Craig has been giving informal talks about issues that concern doctors and priests to the Anthroposophical Medical Club at the National College of Naturopathic Medicine in Portland. At times Sanford will give a lecture on a specifically anthroposophical theme, sponsored by the Portland Branch.

One of the main questions for me is: what to do when there is no priest here? For the past four years my husband and I have been holding a Sunday morning study. We look at and ponder the Gospel reading used in Sacramento. Sometimes one person joins us, other times we have five or more at our table. We made the decision to meet no matter who showed up, so we could have a connection to the happenings in The Christian Community, every week.

Recently, we have added a blog to our bag of tricks. Check it out — ccoregon.blogspot.com. Now, anyone who wants to know what is happening in Oregon and Washington can look in one place and find out all the details. Let us know if you would like to visit: 503-353-1818 or galenalyn@gmail.com.

Sandra Burch



Preparing for Christmas

Advent is that special time of year when no one has any time. The little time we do have seems to disappear faster and faster as Christmas approaches. Breathless we rush from one thing to another: meetings, festive gatherings, perhaps school commitments and social gatherings. Then there are the usual Christmas preparations: cleaning and arranging the house to prepare a place for the Christmas tree and all the other Christmas decorations. Gifts must be selected, purchased, wrapped and delivered, Christmas cards and letters must be sent. All this as the days shorten. The pressure can become so great for some that they almost pray for January and the time when it is all behind them.

In other words Christmas is ruined. The frantic pace leaves it stillborn and hoping that, well... maybe next year. Friedrich Rittelmeyer labeled this atmosphere of hectic pressure “Christmas Fever.” He described it as one of the most ingenious and successful inventions of the devil, who would, of course, like to prevent us from experiencing the real significance of Christmas. Probably no one escapes at least a touch of this fever that so often leaves us irritable and exhausted at the start of the twelve Holy Nights.

Our susceptibility is not hard to explain. It results from our sensing just how important these twelve days and nights really are. We unconsciously sense the approach of an important event and feel impelled to prepare. This sensing could be called a “divining” for it rises out of the depths where the divine lives in the soul. The divining grows stronger as the year grows darker; as the time between twilight in the morning and twilight in the evening grows so short it seems that the day is ruled by twilight. Our divining in the twilight time of the year leads us to undertake too much. Too easily we lose sight of the essentials and wind up without strength for *inner* preparations.

Yet outward preparations are not without meaning. All these external preparations are a reflection of that which we can do inwardly to prepare for Christmas. The impulse to clean the house now is a metamorphosis of another feeling that rises in the soul as Christmas approaches: a feeling that can be expressed in the words, *“I must order my thinking and feeling, I must cultivate the proper thoughts and feelings to prepare for the coming one.”* The peace needed for this inner ordering and contemplation is exactly what Christmas fever would take from us.



Behind the gifts we make for others stands the archetype of all giving, the giving of one's self. Every year during Advent this picture from the spiritual world draws near the earth. It is *the archetype of sacrifice*, the spiritual picture of offering. From the creation to the birth of Christ

Photo Credit: L. Hildreth. 15th century icon at the Byzantine and Christian Museum, Athens.

this picture drew closer and closer to the earth. At Christmas we celebrate the sacrifice of God's son to the destiny of the earth and humanity. In the person of Jesus of Nazareth this offering became visible in the realm of humanity. The evolution of God, his "becoming," which normally is veiled from human eyes, becomes visible in the picture of man's becoming. Both are possible only through sacrifice.

We become more than we are; we grow, only through giving of ourselves. During Advent we hear *the call to become*, to grow beyond ourselves. This is the deeper impulse behind all giving. Giving someone a present can certainly bring happiness, but if we give of ourselves, *if we are there* for others, then we truly prepare for Christmas. For giving something of our own self creates a free space within the soul, the free space into which Christ can be born when the Holy Night comes.

Rev. Jim Hinds

This God is No Longer Needed

Inspired by Luke 9: 1-17

There is a God that so many of us grew up with, who is like a policeman with a radar gun on the highway, always watching and waiting to doll out punishment if we break the law. We all know this God well. He wants us to avoid sin at all costs by following the rules, never failing, never breaking or else wrath.

This picture of God, spoken of in so many churches, countless mosques and synagogues across all lands, *this God is no longer needed*. For it is a caricature, an unhelpful shadow of the real God. This tyrant with his rules is no longer helpful because our task is *not to be good, but to become good*. And true becoming, true development is impossible without mistakes; to *become good* we need a god who can help us encounter our guilt, grow through sufferings, transform darkness into spirit maturity. *But the god of rules knows nothing of this*. For the tyrant with the radar gun has never transformed through pain; he only condemns from afar.

What is most needed today is a relationship with a God who has in love entered the darkness with us, suffered and come through the power of sin. *We need a god who knows how to become new because we must become new*. We need a God who knows that there is light hidden in the darkness. A god who knows that...

Rev. Jonah Evans

"There is a brokenness
out of which comes the unbroken,
a shatteredness
out of which blooms the unshatterable.

(A god who knows) There is a sorrow
beyond all grief which leads to joy
and a fragility
out of whose depths emerges strength.
(excerpt from Rashani poem)

Faith

Faith Lerner is a woman of faith. Raised as a Catholic, she loved the exposure she had to the sacraments and the pictures it offered of the spiritual world. Later, she yearned for a religious experience that felt more true to her, more aligned with her values. In her quest for a spiritual path to guide her in her life, she studied and explored Hinduism, Sufism, and Buddhism.

“Despite all that I found to be true and helpful in those teachings, I still missed something from my early days in the Catholic Church, something I couldn't really name, until I found the Christian Community,” Faith shared. “When I attended the Act of Consecration of Man for the first time, tears started to flow down my face. I realized I was longing for the sacrament and for a relationship to Christ that was offered in complete freedom with no dogma or political affiliations,” Faith continued. “I truly could not believe such a community existed on the Earth!”

After many years of exploration, Faith found what she had been seeking in a little trailer on a biodynamic farm in East Troy. Faith had found her spiritual home.



“It all started with a phone conversation with Rev. Richard Dancey several weeks prior to attending my first service,” Faith said. “The conversation was unlike any conversation I had ever had in my life.”

That night, Faith clearly remembers dreaming of Rev. Dancey and saw him as he really looks, it turns out! “I called my friend who had introduced us and told her I needed to attend a Christian Community event and meet this Rev. Dancey,” Faith added. “Were it not for that conversation in which he embodied the very essence of the Christian Community, I would never have gone to East Troy.”

This entire experience was the culmination of Faith’s lifetime of seeking, and finding, her spiritual path. She describes the experience as transformative, in large part because of the community of people who were sharing their spiritual life and experiences.

Faith feels an intense commitment to everything the Christian Community embodies and is grateful for the journey she has traveled, learning and growing in spirit. “I have always felt that it is important to ‘give forward’ the gifts we have been blessed to receive,” Faith commented. “When I am gone, I want my resources to live on, expressing support for the continuance of the Christian Community so that others may benefit as well.”

Faith hopes that the sacraments will continue to be celebrated on Earth and that more people will have the opportunity to experience the sacraments and this living community of Christians. By including the Christian Community in her will, she is making certain that the resources she does have will be used as she wishes after crossing the threshold.

“I met with an attorney to create my will so that my resources are available to care for both my heirs as well as my spiritual community,” Faith shared.

Faith strongly recommends that everyone put their affairs in order and while doing so, consider the benefits of giving some portion to the Christian Community if that community has been a source of spiritual nourishment in life. For Faith, it is a wonderful way to demonstrate your continued commitment to the community from the other side and to give an example of stewardship to our younger family members.

“One of the best feelings I have is to know my plans are fully in place and that whatever happens to me, the individuals and communities I care for will continue to receive my support over time,” Faith said.

If you would like to receive a free information packet on creating a will and leaving a future gift to the Christian Community, please call or email Mary Hirsch for a confidential communication. Email: hirschmj@comcast.net Phone: 732.232.5159.

Mary Hirsh

One Child’s Impression of the October Lantern Walk in Washington, D.C.



As Selma left the second time, she stopped and was pensive for a moment, then said, "Blessings on everyone here. Blessings on Rumpelstiltskin, blessings on the miller's daughter, blessings on the fairy, blessings on Cinderella..." Then she said, "What are tarts?" I explained briefly. She said, "I want to learn how to make tarts so when we go back and the Queen of Hearts asks me if I have tarts, I can say yes!" She was pretty frightened of the witch. She also said "that fairy was so pretty!"

It was so awesome! Great job to everyone.

Take Heart! I Have Overcome the World!

With these transcendent words of Christ from the Gospel of John (16:33) in mind and heart, the Christian Community in Argentina takes great pleasure in inviting you to the sixth Inter-American Congress from July 23-31, 2016. It will take place in the center of our country in the province of Córdoba near the city of Carlos Paz. This year's conference continues the impulse begun in 1995, when the first congress took place in Kimberton, Pennsylvania. The second one was in Lima, Perú in 1999, the next in San Francisco in 2003. Then came Botucatu (Brazil) 2007 and last time in Vancouver, 2012. Each time we built bridges amongst the widely dispersed congregations in both Americas and united hearts of members, friends and those interested in the Christian Community, through shared experiences and personal encounters.

This time the theme chosen has a broad scope:

Observing the trials of our time in the Light of the New Coming of Christ

We hope to approach it with a combination of humility and courage, which we find expressed in the words of one of our founding priests, Emil Bock, as follows: "In a humanity scourged by anguished dreams which asks itself: How much more is to come? We want to be a silent group which knows what is coming. Because we know Who is coming! And with His Coming may come whatever has to come!"

The event will take place in a Franciscan residence in the beautiful hills of Córdoba which honors the Franciscan principle of simplicity and care. All activities: the services, the lectures, the workshops, the meals as well as the sleeping quarters are within the residence, allowing in this way a sustained and shared living together for up to 400 participants.

The languages spoken will be English, Portuguese and Spanish, and this year we will also have a workshop in French, expressing in this way the joy of the commencement of the celebrations in Quebec in this fourth European language on the continent.

We anticipate having a great number of young people over the age of 17 joining in on the general program of activities. We may offer some workshops just for them. We are very sorry not to be able to offer a program for children.

We have calculated a cost of \$450.00 per participant, which covers complete lodging and meals for the eight nights and nine days, as well as the costs of the congress itself. We ask all who register to seriously consider the possibility of making a voluntary extra donation so as to create a solidarity fund for those who cannot pay the total amount. We also suggest that if this need arises, a local solution be found, and only when not possible to ask for help from the Argentine organization through the local congregation.

For more information, please visit the conference website: www.confriad2016.org

Movement in our Movement

The following moves and new sendings are happening within our region:

Rev. Lisa Hildreth was sent to the Boston congregation after her ordination in Spring Valley.

Rev. Franziska Hesse is moving from the Taconic/Berkshire congregation to help out in New Zealand, which currently has only one priest.

Rev. Hugh Thornton was sent to the Taconic/Berkshire congregation from Spring Valley.

Rev. Patrick Kennedy moved to the Spring Valley congregation, and is also taking on responsibilities with Rev. Bastiaan Baan at the Seminary.

Rev. Richard Dancey was sent to Washington D.C. from Chicago.