



**THE CHRISTIAN
COMMUNITY**
MOVEMENT FOR RELIGIOUS RENEWAL

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North American Newsletter

Volume 26, No. 1, Spring, 2018



Red is the Color of Life

Rev. Rafal Nowak

Red is the color of life!

It is the color of sunrise, the color of strength, the color of love.

It is the color of our life-carrying, pulsating blood – the vehicle of our passions, of our desires, of our will – to be and to live.

Red is the color of human beings immersed in life – wanting to live, wanting to be engaged, wanting to be active here on Earth.

Red is the color of Resurrection, the color of the new beginning, the color of the renewal of life.

It is the color of blood streaming out of the open wounds of the Risen One, into the dark, dried out, life longing Earth – streaming into our consciousness, into our reality, permeating

and transubstantiating the redness of our own blood into virescent, gentle substance of healing, the substance of compassion, of forgiveness, and offering.

So that following his path – the path of overcoming, the path of resurrection – in our own lives, we may become the source of confidence, the source of healing, the source of joy for this dying world, longing for renewal.

Picture: The Easter Garden at The Christian Community in Spring Valley, NY

Sacraments, Rituals, and Celebrations

Rev. Cynthia Hindes

Recently a question arose about the differences between sacraments, rituals, and any other celebrations. In The Christian Community, we have seven sacraments and three other rituals, namely the Sunday Service for Children, the Funeral service (for adults), and a separate funeral service for children who have died. In addition, there are various consecration rituals for vestments, utensils and other elements used in the sacraments. So what is the difference between a sacrament, a ritual and a celebration?

I think a common theme among all three is that they are vessels, containers. They have a shape or form; a beginning, middle and ending. A celebration has a form. For a birthday party, it is a cake and candles, singing happy birthday, opening gifts. In general, celebrations have a form that is looser and can be adapted to the social setting. One could say that celebrations have a more horizontal quality. They don't aim to be highly elevated, but rather to spread good cheer.

In the case of our sacraments and rituals, the 'vessels' are filled with words and gestures that both contain and convey soul and spiritual content. The words and gestures, even the clothing (vestments) are liturgically prescribed. If something outside of the liturgical words is to be expressed, such as a sermon or eulogy, a slight change of vestments happens. The priest puts on the biretta or takes off the cloak to indicate that a change of level of address is taking place. The sermon or eulogy has more of a horizontal soul quality, addressed to the gathered congregation.

The sacraments themselves, in contrast to a celebration, have a more vertical quality. Their aim is to be a container for the highest thoughts, feelings and devotion that we human beings can generate. They also are vessels for the grace-fire poured out by beings of the spiritual world – the angels and the highest divine beings, the Father, Christ and the Holy Spirit. Like a clay vessel that serves as a water pot, or a fire bowl, such a container must be properly shaped, strong, fired and 'leak-proof.' One can say that the higher we address our actions and ourselves, the stronger the container needs to be for what will be offered and received.

Indeed, the spiritual world itself has sent down the appropriate container for the sacraments. The liturgy, the words, the vestments, the actions and gestures were given by the spiritual world for our time. Hence, they cannot be arbitrarily changed to suit social circumstances. Together the elements all form the strong vessel for our prayers, for our gratitude, and for our offering of substance and self. And they are the strong containers for the supra-personal fire of grace to be poured out of the sacraments into our souls and spirits.



Picture: Welcoming Spring at The Christian Community in Boston

Unity Prayer

Rev. Nora Minassian

Prayer offered by Rev. Nora Minassian at the 24th Annual MLK Community Prayer Breakfast on April 7th, 2018 at the Phoenixville Middle School in Phoenixville, PA.

Let us pray:

Dear Lord, we come to you with gratitude for all your creation filled with wisdom and beauty. You send your light to us. You give us air to breath, bread to eat, water to drink and ground on which we walk. They unite us all.

We come to you with humility. For we know not what we do with your works, with your creation, with the gifts of life that you give us. We claim them to be ours and deny them to our fellow men. We draw borders and deport our fellow men. We pollute the air, take down forests and build mountains of trash. We impose sanctions so we can consume. We kill so we can drive. We look at the speck in our brother's eye and become blind to the log in our own eye. Forgive us and open our eyes.

Help us stop turning against your creation. For our fight is not against flesh and blood like the Apostle Paul says (Eph. 6) but against the attacks of the adversarial forces tempting us with fear, lies and greed. Help us seek justice not by revenge but by forgiveness, by imbuing ourselves with truth, with you, Lord. Help us protect each other with the knowledge that you are in each one of us, you are in our diversity – whatever height, gender, sex, race, faith, religion, age, language, color. You are in all of us. If one of us suffers, we all suffer, if one of us is honored, we all rejoice. (1. Cor. 12)

We thank you for our diversity. Our differences are not there for us to just tolerate but to embrace and celebrate. Open our hearts to find you in each other. You call us your friends and give your life for us. Help us be each other's friends and lay down our lives for each other. Help us love those who hurt us, as Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. says, "Love is the only force capable of transforming enemy into a friend." Your love unites us all.

Teach us that beautiful timeless prayer that you taught your disciples, that makes us your and each others' brothers and sisters. We pray with you Lord:

Our Father, who art in the heavens, hallowed be Thy Name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done as above in the heavens, so also on the earth. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil. For Thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever.

Amen

From your Regional Board of Trustees

A Report from Rev. Craig Wiggins, President

For those of you reading about the Regional Board for the first time, here are the bare bones: We meet once a month on a conference call as well as twice a year in person for three days. Our main task is to provide for the retired priests and their dependents. Other tasks include supporting the regional Lenker as well as helping the priest seminary where we can. Occasionally other questions of a regional/international nature come up, such as supporting exploratory travels into areas where no Christian Community activity has taken place before. As you can imagine, a lot of this responsibility involves handling money, both in the form of contributions from each congregation in North America as well as donations and legacies received from individuals and foundations. We present our yearly financial report at the Annual Meeting of the Members. The names of the board members appear at the end of this article.

A few highlights of the last year:

Kate Kennedy, who serves as administrator to our Lenker, Rev. Oliver Steinrueck, also carries out the task of Legacy Giving Coordinator. This newsletter includes a separate article about her work.

A special project that was largely coordinated by Kate and which involved efforts from many people, priests and lay people alike, was the revamping of the North American website. If you haven't seen it yet, go to <https://www.thechristiancommunity.org/>

Several years ago, an anonymous donor gave a substantial contribution in the form of a matching grant to help priest families with children attending Waldorf School. Thanks to many small and large gifts from individuals and congregations, we were able to match the grant and have continued to disburse funds to those families. A big warm thanks to all who have contributed! Contributions are always welcome, see address on the next page.

We are also exploring how we can solidify the fiscal relationship between the two sovereign nations that make up our region: Canada and the USA.

A typical Board meeting begins with a report from Oliver Steinrueck, in which we hear about the latest developments in the congregations, the seminary and in the lives of retired priests and their dependents. Our treasurer, Richard Meyers, then reviews the latest financial developments. Kate Kennedy then reports on matters concerning the administrator's work. Other members bring contributions about matters they have taken up and we develop new insights regularly. Right now we are contemplating what the theme and content of the next Delegates' meeting should be.

Speaking of the Delegates' Meeting, please save the dates:

Thursday evening October 25 through lunch time on Saturday October 27.

The Annual Meeting of the Members will take place on Friday afternoon.

We will meet at the Christian Community Church in Fair Oaks, CA. The boards and priests of each congregation will be receiving more information about this meeting at the beginning of September.

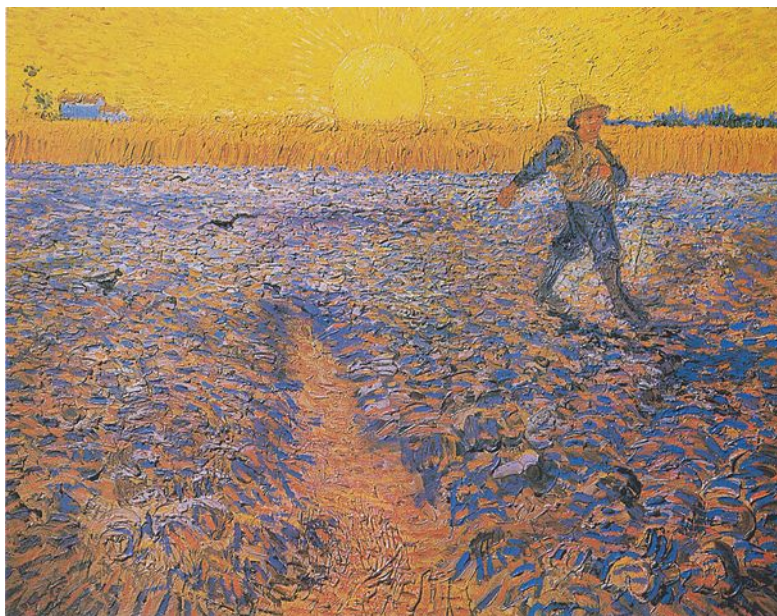
If you wish to contribute to the Children's Educational fund or to another project of the Regional Board, you can send a check made out to *The Christian Community Central Fund* to:

The Christian Community
c/o Melissa Kay
906 Divisadero
San Francisco, CA 94115

For the Regional Board,
Rev. Craig Wiggins, President

The members:
Bruce Chamberlin (Washington DC/Baltimore)
Jodi Dill (Devon, PA)
Rev. Jonah Evans (Toronto)
Kate Kristensen (San Francisco)
Richard Meyers, Treasurer (Taconic-Berkshire)
George Riley (Taconic-Berkshire)
Rev. Oliver Steinrueck, *ex officio* (Spring Valley)

As well as our invaluable support personnel:
Melissa Kay (Bookkeeper)
Kate Kennedy (Administrator/Legacy Giving Coordinator)



Sower in the Setting Sun by Vincent van Gogh, 1888.
Image from Wikimedia Commons.

The Doorway of His Wound

Rev. Gisela Wielki

Every human being has come into this life with a rip and a tear. We enter this world, this life, by way of a wound. With the bursting of the amniotic sac blood and water are discharged. Head first the newborn is caught by loving arms that welcome the child into life, into this our world.

The opening by which we are born is a mortal wound. It delivers us unto death. It is a wound inflicted upon the human being at birth on account of the Fall. How can the birth wound be closed? How can our entry into death at birth be healed? Do we have to look for its healing to another opening, another gateway, to one that does not lead into death?

In a remarkable Bible illustration from the 13th century Christ is shown on the cross. Out of the open wound in his side the Risen Christ gently pulls out what looks like a red colored caul, a red amniotic membrane. Ripped on top it shows the head, neck and arms of a tiny figure emerging. The figure looks like someone still destined to grow. But the head already bears a crown. The hands of the extended arms carry and offer a golden chalice.

Many centuries earlier St. Augustine spoke of the sacraments as having come forth by way of a door, a gateway: 'And the door is surely the wound made in the side of the Crucified when pierced by the lance, that there a gate of life might be opened, whence the sacraments have flowed forth, without which there is no entrance to the life that is truly life.'

Christ's blood in the chalice is the healing medicine. The wound in his side is the door, the gateway, from which in the chalice his blood is offered to us. From it we drink life abundantly. It is the life-blood of deathless life. It is life-blood warmed by the breath of the Risen Christ.



Image: Bible moralisée: "The Creation of Eve" and "The Birth of Ecclesia"
fol 2v (detail). Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, Vienna. 1225-49

The Life of a Gift after Death

Kate Kennedy, Legacy Giving Coordinator

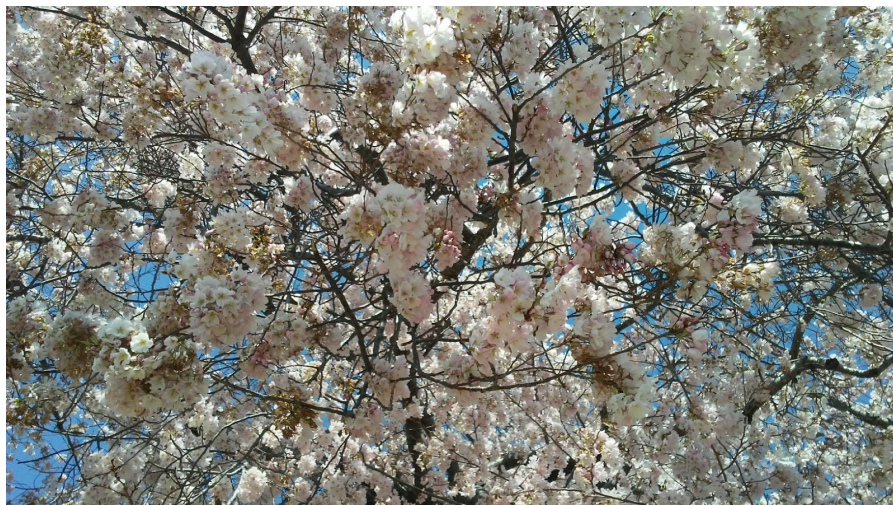
Anyone who has attended the Act of Consecration for some time will probably notice that it is not only those physically present in the chapel who are called to participate, to offer at the altar. Indeed, “all those who have died” are called each and every time. And those souls who found a connection to the Act of Consecration while alive will doubtless take up this invitation once they have crossed to the other side. This is one reason why even a weekday service with only a few people in the chapel can feel just as full as a Sunday service.

It can be comforting to think about this connection to the Christian Community communion service that remains after death. And yet there is still another way that individuals can bless our communities after they die, and this is through a legacy gift. Most, if not all, of our communities have at some point been fortunate enough to receive a gift that enabled them to do something that seemed, up until that point, unreachable. Whether it was to repair an existing structure, to transition from an affiliate community to one that could support a priest, or simply to meet the monthly running costs at a moment when things looked dire – gifts large and small have repeatedly allowed communities to take that next step in their becoming.

A legacy gift breathes new life into a congregation. It is a concrete “yes” materially and spiritually that the entire community and region feels and is carried by. How does it do this, and how is it different from a donation made by someone who is still living?

As the legacy giving coordinator for North America, I think a lot about this question. And this is what I have come to:

While alive, the will to see the Christian Community grow and flourish is expressed through donations and volunteer efforts. Unlike money exchanged for goods and services, the value of a gift always exceeds the dollar amount given. This is because a free gift carries with it, in addition to the dollar amount, two more things besides. It carries *the good will* of the giver and the *impulse for the resources to flow*, rather than remain tucked away under a mattress or in a bank



account. This good will and impulse towards flow supports the life force of those who receive such a gift.

A legacy gift carries this added value, but it also carries more. It increases even more in strength and power, because inherently tied to it is the *meaning of one's life*. The person who has made plans for such a

gift is in effect saying, “The renewal of the sacraments is a part of what I wanted to do here. This is part of what my life was about, and I want to see the Christian Community grow and blossom in the future even after I am no longer alive.” You could say that the first half of the gift is the thoughtful arrangement for it before death, and the second half is the completion of a life *with that intention still intact*. This lasting intention is what is experienced as so powerful and life giving within a congregation.

Perhaps you have contemplated planning such a gift. There are a number of simple ways to do so. Leaving a bequest in your will, creating a living trust, and naming the Christian Community as one of the beneficiaries in your life insurance policy are just a few. If you would like to explore planning a legacy gift, please reach out to your congregation’s legacy liaison or feel free to contact me with any questions you may have. I can be reached at (845) 425-5705 or ccnaoffice@gmail.com.

Where is the Seminary?

Where will the Seminary Be?

[A Letter from Revs. Patrick Kennedy and Bastiaan Baan, Seminary Directors](#)

A few weeks ago we heard from the Circle of Seven that more time is needed to work on the decision of the location of the Seminary in North America. For this reason the seminary will remain for another year in Spring Valley, NY.

Many elements go into the research that has been done exploring how and where to build the future for our priest training. In working together these past two plus years, we have come to recognize that the element of collaboration and shared carrying of the seminary is essential. With Bastiaan leaving in December, finding a way to make it possible to have a true team of directors working in one location is no small challenge. This becomes more possible in communities where more than one priest are available for the work of the congregation. But making such decisions takes time and good planning and so we are happy to work further with the leadership in Europe in such preparations.

Another reason that staying in Spring Valley for another year will prove beneficial is that we hope to have an ordination preparation group who, in the Spring of 2019, look towards a possible priest ordination. This process needs a quiet, stable environment, which is provided by the existing situation of the seminary.

For more news, please read the Seminary Newsletter. Your continued good thoughts and prayers and support continue to carry us through this time of tremendous transition.

Twenty Months in New Zealand

Rev. Franziska Hesse

I flew to New Zealand on a cold December day, arriving the next day into summer weather. After 23 hours travel time, in need of a cup of coffee, I discovered there is no half and half in NZ. A first culture shock!

I went to New Zealand to provide some relief to an acute and continuous shortage of priests in that country. Due to the sudden diagnosis of a serious cancer in the wife of my colleague in New Zealand, I went three months sooner than anticipated, just in time to be present at the funeral, which came much quicker than hoped for. It was good that I was able to be of support through the next extremely difficult months for my colleague.



One of the first questions I was asked was: Will you please do the family camp, otherwise we will have no services. Well, I had never been to a family camp, nor any other camp for that matter, but of course I said yes. And I looked forward to being out in Nature in the summer weather. Big mistake – I was freezing the whole time and wore every piece of clothing I had brought along, including a down jacket. Yes, summer is not what we expect here. But aside from that all went well.



New Zealand, which is comparable in size to Great Britain (but has only 4 ½ million people), has currently just one congregation with a resident priest in Auckland, a city with a third of New Zealand's population. At one time there were three centers with a priest and one affiliate. I took on visiting two of these places, Wellington and Hawke's Bay, both on the North Island. My colleague went to Christchurch which is on the South Island. The journeys were mostly done by plane due to the distances. (And what a dream to fly in New

Zealand, no long lines, no pat downs, getting to the airport 30 min. before departure was all that was needed. We can only dream of such ease in air travel.)

The Islands of New Zealand, so far away at the southernmost border of the Pacific are a world unto themselves. It is a land and a country that is still becoming. Plant life is rich and lush, lots of ferns, even tree ferns, the bush is thick and impenetrable. There are very few flowers and they are small and mostly white, except for the incredible pohutukawa which blooms with beautiful red blossoms at Christmas time and has been dubbed the New Zealand Christmas Tree. When the first humans came to the islands, which was at the earliest in the 3rd or 4th century, though



conventional research thinks it was only in the 12th or 13th century, there were no native mammals on the island but an abundance of birds, a number of them flightless.

New Zealand is of course a volcanic island, part of the Pacific Rim of Fire, where earthquakes are a regular occurrence, so even the land mass is not finished shaping itself. All this gives the feeling of a land that is still becoming, of being created before our own eyes. And beyond the land aspect my impression has been that this land has not yet found, or filled its own soul being which creates a feeling of emptiness. When on my return I had the opportunity to go to Romania I was amazed by the contrast, as Romania with its long, long history and much suffering is a country with a deep soul that is very tangible (more of this journey another time).

The work of The Christian Community in New Zealand is challenging as there is nothing in the surroundings, in the atmosphere into which it can anchor itself. Christianity has not been present for more than about 300 years, brought to the land by the British. And even though many of the community members are deeply devoted and have been with it since the beginning of our work there, through many ups and downs, nevertheless what is created in the moment at the altar dissipates quickly. It is again and again a new beginning. And that is hard work for the priests and the congregations; it is a lonely task in a country that is truly a place at the end of the world — an experience that is tangibly real.

The family camps that take place every year are a wonderful and constructive way to unite the congregations from the different parts of the country. There you will meet members who passed their 80th birthday mingling with children of any age in a most harmonious way. The daily Act of Consecration, the Sunday Service for Children, study groups, presentations, artistic activity, play and stories, hikes and swimming offer something for everyone. And in the kitchen some are busy preparing delicious food for everyone. In many ways these yearly camps hold the movement together under these fragile circumstances.

The country is of course beautiful, but with its shaking earth, its abundance of water all around, with its lively air and wind it creates unique challenges for human beings, making it hard to be firmly grounded on the earth, to be committed to tasks of inner and outer transformation. For many, commitment is difficult. On the other hand one is struck by the friendliness of the people, most noticeable in daily ordinary encounters. The pressure of daily life, though the people are by no means well off, is far less intense than in the US. Kiwis know how to appreciate the mellow aspects of life.

What the future of The Christian Community will be in New Zealand is hard to foresee. Will there be more priests available in the future; will the congregations be able to continue to provide the financial underpinnings?

What does our presence mean for this evolving land and country; what will unfold in this faraway place in the future because the renewed sacraments were present? These and many other





questions need to be lived with and pondered for the times to come. What we can do, is to think of the struggles of New Zealand and also Australia (though they are different) when we ourselves gather at the altar and send them strength for their work. The first Act of Consecration of Man each day is celebrated in New Zealand. It is the land of the rising sun, the beginning of every New Day!

I am deeply grateful for this completely new experience at the end of the world and wish them all the very best.

Pictures: The Christian Community Auckland; the city; Pohutukawa (NZ Christmas tree); South Island: Mount Cook, Milford Sound

Summer and Autumn Lecture Tour, 2018 — Bastiaan Baan

Announcement

Rev. Bastiaan Baan will give a lecture tour with conferences in various congregations and communities in North America before his return to the Netherlands in December. Please see the details below and contact the host community for further information, or visit the website of the seminary.

July 27 - 29: Devon, PA, “The Future of the Earth”

August 4 - 5: Chicago, “How to Know, Confront and Work with Evil”

August 17 -18: Los Angeles Anthroposophical Society, “The Future of the Earth”

August 19: Los Angeles Christian Community, “The Future of the Earth”

August 24 - 26: Sacramento, “How to Know, Confront and Work with Evil”

September 1 - 3: Vancouver, “How to Know, Confront and Work with Evil”

September 29 - 30: Boston, “Old and New Initiation”

October 12: 7:00 pm - 9:00 pm and October 13, 10:00 am - 3:00 pm: Two day lecture and workshop; Anthroposophical Society, New York City, “Lord of the Elements”

October 20 - 21: Hillsdale, NY, “How to Know, Confront and Work with Evil”

November 2 - 4: Washington DC, “How to Form a Brotherhood of the Living and the Dead”

Reflections Following a Visit Across the Atlantic

Rev. Paul Newton, Christian Community Priest in Edinburgh, Scotland

I was ordained six years ago and was sent from where I had lived for many years (Wisconsin) across the Atlantic to work in Scotland (Edinburgh). So it was very interesting for me, at the beginning of this year, to return on a visit to the Midwest as a priest.

I found in a number of people that I met in the Christian Community a strong resonance with and interest in Celtic Christianity in general and the island of Iona (the Dark Ages center of Celtic Christianity on the west coast of Scotland) in particular. Those who hadn't already been there longed to go there!

Whilst in the Chicago congregation, I told the children one version of the story of St. Bride who comes as a young child to Iona, the island of the druids, and for whom the island and the experience of the elements there served as her teacher. One day, the story goes, as a young woman, she goes to a spring to draw water but follows a white blackbird through an archway formed by two trees. She finds herself in Bethlehem where she is called to serve as nursemaid for the Christ Child before returning through the 'portal' to Iona.

Later, before I left Chicago I wanted to tell the children more about Columba who founded the Abbey on Iona. In preparation, I took myself in imagination to Iona – and suddenly *I* was somewhere else! Another special place, at the other end of the British Isles, Tintagel in Cornwall. (Interestingly enough, one could say that in both places there is a direct westward path to N. America: Tintagel is further south than Ireland, Iona further north.) So the children got to hear about an imagined visit of the tin merchant Joseph of Arimathea to the druids at Tintagel.

So, all this connecting up across space and time!



Tobar nah Aois, Iona — looking across the Atlantic (America is far in the distance!)
Perhaps this is where Bride went to draw water.

When I was in Viroqua, Wisconsin, we had a conversation about the opening sentences of the Offertory in the Act of Consecration of Man. It began with a question from a biodynamic farmer, Steven Adams, concerning the meaning of “all true Christians who are born.” We talked about who might be a “true Christian” but we looked more largely at the ever-widening circle of those explicitly included in the ritual at the beginning of the Offertory: from the celebrant, to those present, to “all true Christians,” to “all those who have died.”

I suggested that it is of the highest significance to develop a *feeling* for participation in the ritual not being constrained by spatial distance. With only one priest covering Chicago and affiliates in Wisconsin and Minnesota, a congregation like Viroqua is only going to be able to host the ritual infrequently. But I encouraged them to feel connected to – and to cultivate that connection – to the service happening at 10:30 most Sundays in Chicago. Without needing to be so bold as to consider themselves included amongst the “true Christians” (!) they could in some degree be amongst those “present.”

We didn’t speak of this, but it’s worth remembering that in the ritual we also connect *across time*, invoking all those who “bringing Christ to life within them, have gone before us.” We pray for the offering to be hallowed by the “Spirit of the widths of space and of the depths of time” so it makes sense that the ritual would not be limited in space or time. Furthermore, the ritual’s very essence connects it to the Mystery of Golgotha, witnessing to Christ’s deed as not something in any way confined to a past moment in a distant place.

The Act of Consecration of Man as a ritual is a kind of shared prayer activity. Prayer as a practice epitomizes the fact that the world of soul and spirit is not constrained by spatial limitations. We can just as well pray for someone on the other side of the world as someone close by physically.

I was first in Chicago as a student at the Seminary. Richard Dancey was both seminary director and congregational priest. For years I have carried with me the experience of attending the congregation’s Prayer Group that Richard initiated and led: a monthly meeting, not for praying together but for supporting individual prayer work and a space for bringing requests for prayer for individuals and specific situations (as well as updates from time to time). I was very glad to discover that this monthly meeting continues – with Richard’s continued help I dare say – and to discover in myself that I still want to introduce this way of working here on the other side of the Atlantic.

Many thanks to Rev. Ann Burfeind for proposing this visit. It was wonderful to meet old friends and new and, as I write this, to be aware of the human connections that were made and how they can be maintained and renewed in our working together in Christ Community.

From The Christian Community Bookshelf

Building and Developing Congregations in Community

In Search of Structures for a New Church

Review by Rev. Bastiaan Baan

This book, written by Maarten Udo de Haes, a former Lenker and member of the Circle of Seven, is probably the only existing study on how to develop affiliates and congregations in our movement. It focuses on the question how to find structures in the spiritual, social and practical life of our congregations that are an expression of the being of The Christian Community—Movement for Religious Renewal.

This book was published in the Netherlands in 1988. Only now it is translated in English (by Philip Mees, Los Angeles) and published by the seminary in North America. Each congregation has received a limited number of copies that are sold as a fundraiser for the congregations. The minimum price of the book is \$8.00. If you wish to order copies and are unable to do so through a local congregation, you may contact the seminary by email at info@christiancommunityseminary.org, providing your mailing address and specifying the number of copies you'd like to receive.

Topics include:

- Development and Structure of Individual and Community
- The Spirit of the Congregation
- The Body of the Congregation
- The Soul of the Congregation
- The Place of Friends, Members and Priests in the Congregation
- Forming the Organs – Hierarchy
- Structure of the Roman Catholic Church and of Protestantism
- Structure of a Congregation in The Christian Community
- Structure of Congregations United in a Region

Sources of Religious Worship

A History of Ritual from the Stone Age to the Present Day

Available this summer from Floris Books.

By Rev. Bastiaan Baan

