

NORTH AMERICAN SEMINARY NEWSLETTER FALL 2018



Back L-R Ana Lipkowitz, Monica Sanchez, Wendy Matus, Anna Silber, Luis Gonzalez, Bella Bat'or Freuman, Cheryl Prigg, Patrick Kennedy (director), Bastiaan Baan (director)

Front L-R Matthias Giles, Elizabeth Majoros, Mimi Coleman, Lisa Hartog, Gillian Cross

Words of Gratitude for Bastiaan and Aeola Baan

- REV. PATRICK KENNEDY, SEMINARY DIRECTOR

Last January we stepped into the streets of New York city and did a silent walk, taking in all that we saw: people, trees, buildings, sky, whatever the city showed us. Then we tried something new. We all began to explore the city with the instruction to pray at the same time, to take in the city through prayer. Our instruction was: Try prayerfully listening to her (the city) and then pray for her. Approach everything and everyone you see and meet through prayer.

After our silent, prayer-filled walk, we met up back at the congregation in New York City to share our experiences. It was deeply moving to hear people describe their honest, humble experiences of how prayer and praying for the city changed everything about how and what they thought, felt and were inspired to do in relationship to the city and her people. Prayer gave us new eyes and ears for the people that crossed our paths. Prayer opened up our hearts to what you could see people carrying in their lives. Prayer stirred wonder in our souls at the weaving of destiny in such a city. This simple little spiritual practice demonstrated so palpably and immediately how prayer lifts, raises and sanctifies things.

And who's idea was it to do this, you ask? Bastiaan Baan's, of course. Since 2011 Bastiaan has approached the work of the seminary in North America in a similar way. Everything about life at the seminary, its classes, the culture of the breakfast room, the thank you letters sent, the relationships cultivated, the board meetings carefully run - all of this and so much more has been carried prayerfully by him. He has consecrated the work here with his inner work of prayerful engagement with all aspects of seminary life. He has lifted up so many of our students into the genuine practice of meditation and prayer. Beyond all admirable gifts of wide and deep knowledge and unceasing efforts, Bastiaan's legacy is a legacy of prayerful spiritual service for the wellbeing of the seminary of the Christian Community in North America.

At the end of December, Bastiaan will be heading back to the Netherlands to work as a congregational priest in Zeist. His wife, Aeola, will precede him, preparing the way. Aeola, too, has carried our students and seminary with dedication, hard practical work and real care for the details. Her work leading our students into the practice of carefully looking at the world through an artistic medium has become an essential element in our training. And her running of the seminary B&B has built an international reputation!

Our gratitude, love - and prayers - go with you! <



Patrick Kennedy and Bastiaan Baan

Building a Boat

- LUIS GONZALEZ, SPAIN, FOURTH YEAR

After the two first years at the seminary, building a boat that could stay afloat in the midst of the waves and surges of the training process, I sailed off for my internship in Toronto and Los Angeles. Coming back now to learn in the classroom again, I appreciate even more the treasures I accumulated through my internships. These treasures gained out of the experiences in these communities and their altars support me deeply in moving forward in the training.

It has taken some weeks to get into the rhythm of our studies again. Even when some of the content is familiar I meet it with new eyes and a renewed interest. The possibility of ordination in five months, which would open a completely new dimension in my life, colors all the aspects of each moment. In the soul life, a special concentration and expectation arises before all that is approaching: vestments, ritual books, travel... and finally a commitment. An essential part of the color of this period comes through the company of my two classmates, Cheryl and Matthias, as we take solid steps in learning to support each other and grow as a group. Also essential to this process is Bastiaan Baan's invaluable mentoring, sharing his wisdom and overall view of the process, as well as the dedication and support of the other directors and teachers.

At this point in the training I practice again and again the same exercise: let the Lord of karma take the rudder of my destiny. I concentrate on the rigging: learn to write sermons, speech, ...

From where I am standing now, looking back at the last three years of the seminary and the new threshold ahead of me, I can only feel a deep gratitude for the immeasurable gifts that I have received. •

The Will of Heaven

— CHERYL PRIGG, AUSTRALIA, FOURTH YEAR

When I was young, I remember looking at a picture book of biblical stories with the image of Jesus standing at a door, gesturing to knock. He was holding a lantern, the door was ajar, revealing a handle only on the other side, and he was waiting. The title of the image was from the Revelation to John, 'Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If any one hears my voice and opens the door, I will come into to him...' I remember wondering if there was a knock or a voice would I hear it?

It is a true image. The only handle is on the inside of the door, and even though the door is ajar, He was waiting. We have the freedom to open the door when we hear the knock and heed the voice, or not. The true light that enlightens all human beings stands at the door and waits for us to decide if we recognize it and accept it, or not.

This pre-ordination semester is a shared journey of methodical study, careful preparation and earnest discernment. The door is open, His voice has been heard and answered, and whilst living deeply and fully in the present, it is obvious that the only good and joyful thing to do is wait on the will of heaven. This is the path of true freedom – to fully trust in the ever-present guidance of the spiritual world, and to be able to answer a resounding 'yes,' to whatever the future may hold. •



Artwork by Open Course participant

You Stand at My Door and You Knock

— LISA HARTOG, THE NETHERLANDS, FIRST YEAR

You stand at my door and You knock and I do not know what to do

Others are coming talking to me and I could not hear You at all

Sometimes I hear You and I am not willing to open my door I don't want to listen to You

I am closing the curtains making my phone calls pretending not noticing You

You stand at my door and you knock I want you to enter my home

I shall be quiet and listen to You I want you to work through my heart

Help me to do what needs to be done united through life and through death

Because You are the way the truth and the life You are our light of the world

Finding the Christian Community

- PAULA WILLIAMS, UNITED STATES, FIRST YEAR



Artwork bu Open Course participant

I found the Waldorf kindergarten when my children were tiny and through the Waldorf school I found anthroposophy. I'd heard from families at the school about the Christian Community Church nearby but hadn't visited. At that time I was in the midst of a long break from religion because as a young adult I'd found myself torn between what I believed and what I was supposed to believe. I visited different types of churches along the way since then (often at times of hardship) but usually came away with the same old feelings of not fitting in. Crisis inevitably brings an opening to something transformative so it's not surprising that it was a crisis that led me to walk through the doors of the Christian Community Church for the first time. The words "Movement for Religious Renewal" describe almost

exactly how it felt to be reunited with the spiritual life I'd been searching for. It was right here all those years but somehow I hadn't found it! Soon after, I noticed a poster in the Church announcing that the Seminary (also nearby) was offering an Open Course. I began attending as many Open Courses as I could. Each course focused on something specific and together they inspired me to work on myself for reasons besides just getting through life. The priests at the Seminary offer so much. I realized this summer it was time to immerse myself in the Seminary even though it would not be easy to make the time to do it. Being here feels like a gift. It took me so long to find the Christian Community – I am thankful for the crisis that brought us together. •

The Path

- MONICA SANCHEZ, PERU, FIRST YEAR

The question 'Why am I here?' leads me to look again at the path that brought me to this place. The answer lies in the decision to accept a new birth. I was born in the Southern Hemisphere and some time ago I began my journey toward that new birth in myself. At the same time, the call of the Northern Hemisphere came to me through several circumstances in my life. Now I feel like I was born here and just like a little girl I am learning to speak and walk in this new life. It is an opportunity that I take as a manifestation of a plan beyond me. •

A Truth on the Way

— GILLIAN CROSS, AUSTRALIA, FIRST YEAR

Step in now
You must step in
What am I stepping into?
A lax
a build
a learning, pearling
reaching and screeching..

I know not what.
I emerge only if I turn.
I turn.
I turn and turn and dizzy I
"A!"
stop. Quiet.
Quiet, I breathe and look up.
I was there all along..
was I?

Yes

With the quiet holding my hand and behind my ears.

With the rustling light on the pine needles
turning them from brown to gold,
brown to gold,
in turn,
brown to gold.

Open Course: Sacramentalism and Alchemy

— DIANA HAYNES, NORTH CAROLINA, OPEN COURSE GUEST

I had no idea what to expect from this course, but I only knew that a course taught by the Reverends Bastiaan Baan, Patrick Kennedy and Jonah Evans would be like hitting the jackpot in Esoteric Christian Mystery Knowledge. And, it was!

The course was so rich that everyone I spoke to felt quite overwhelmed by the transformational potency of each lecture.

Here is some of what we learned.

All sacrament is based on the Word becoming Flesh, the spiritual permeating matter. Alchemy may be conceived of as the Flesh becoming Word.

The first alchemical deed of Christ was at the Marriage in Cana when he took the purest water, and working with his mother, transformed the spiritual forces in the water, 'prima or original mater', into 'ultima or future mater' (Mater means mother).

Christ so permeated the world with his Spirit that he is everywhere present, even in the deepest darkness of our despair. In fact, the Christ experience can awaken in our hearts when we are broken open by illness or intense suffering and we face our 'powerlessness' with genuine humility. Then we can be made new just as all things must die to be reborn. The path of Christ was not "up and away," but in and through. We may meet him in transformed suffering and discover our wholeness.

The deed of Golgotha is not finished! It continues in us. The Word is still becoming Flesh, becoming embodied in us. In a true rite, something is created which will endure and become the future spirit substance of the New Jerusalem.

A Jewish rabbi once asked, "What did God do after the seventh day of creation?" When nobody could give an answer, the rabbi said, "He created marriages!" Our joined task is to heal what has become separated. The sacraments offer reconciliation between God and humanity, male and female, the higher and lower self. Through our working with Christ, all of creation will be liberated and a new song will be sung in the heavens and on the earth! •



Participants at September Open Course, 'Sacramentalism and Alchemy'

The Mystical Voice

- WRITTEN BY A PARTICIPANT IN THE OPEN COURSE: SACRAMENTALISM AND ALCHEMY

The trees are longing for the heart's offering To be taken to the mouth of the wind That sings and creates the calling Let all who hear enter the upper room Where the celebrated word Revived in the living light Breaks us open ... The battle field can become an altar If one can carry the cup Into the fire of the crucible When the horrifying moment can be touched In an encounter of unexpected beauty There is freedom to walk *Inside the open field of the wounded* Slipping eloquently into the essence of the blood Towards the uprising silence.

Contemplation on the 'unknown Word'

- MATTHIAS GILES, UNITED STATES, FOURTH YEAR

There must be a word, unspoken by the human being,

A Word uttered only by God.

This word, the unknown word, is the word of deepest knowing that calls out to the core of the known.

It is the compliment, the twin, of that most intimate, most precious word spoken by the heart of every human being: "I"

Only God could speak this counterpart-this word that is at once 'I' and not 'I',

that is at once wholly common and singularly specific.

This is the voice at the door, the knock at the threshold of every heart.

This word, in its sounding, is both within and without.

He speaks my name.

The word is my name divested of its generality and, hearing it, I find that it belongs to Him, I belong to Him.

I am called out from the tomb.

He is the Word, and the word speaks me. <

First Youth Group Meeting in Toronto

— JEANA LEE, UNITED STATES, INTERN



Youth group attendees

Picture three 10th graders wielding long-handled shears and a saw, cutting back ash tree suckers and dead branches. We filled three wheelbarrows of woody debris from the church grounds on a sunny and brisk autumn afternoon. Inside we ate pizza and played silly improv games, then discussed plans for future service activities, like a trash pickup and cooking a meal for the elderly members of our community. In the church's small chapel we spent some silent moments together and shared a reading from the Gospel before bidding each other farewell. I wonder how this group will evolve? •

A Meeting with Christ

— JEANA LEE, UNITED STATES, INTERN

This summer, students of the three seminaries of the Christian Community participated in an intensive, one-week course facilitated by Peter Selg, at the Goetheanum in Dornach. During this time at the Goetheanum, we spent over an hour in the room where Rudolf Steiner's statue of the Representative of Man shaped the space. Had it not been for the preparatory work done with Peter Selg, I do not think my experience with the statue would have been so powerful.

The seminary students from Germany enriched all of my experiences in Dornach, through their lively individualities, their patient English translations, and playful camaraderie. The first afternoon with Peter Selg (Patrick Kennedy translating from the German), we learned about the process leading up to the founding of the Christian Community. One aspect new to me was Steiner's collaboration with Friedrich Rittlemeyer in finding a physical expression of the Christ – what would his features have looked like? – a face only for compassion, hands only for healing, feet to walk towards the cross.

With Peter Selg in Dornach



In the morning before viewing the sculpture itself, we visited the studio where Steiner made models and prototypes of the figures of the statue. We followed the development of the figures and heard stories of notable phases in the process; for example, we saw first a younger version of the face of the human figure, and imagined it having the profound experiences described in Steiner's Fifth Gospel that perhaps transformed it into the expression on the older face.

The second half of the morning was spent in Steiner's study. It is the room where Steiner met with the students who first asked whether it might be possible to form a third church, one that could renew both Catholic and Lutheran Christianity, where he carved the face of the Representative, and where he died, the space was sparsely furnished. Steiner's death mask covered in a sheer veil was displayed on one of just two tables in the room. And yet the space was full – with sunlight on the day we visited, but more strongly with all of the other people who had visited, and who had worked there with Steiner in that room.

After lunch we visited the statue. As I sat in different places on the viewing platform, I tried to take in the forms and expressions, to let them work upon me. The gesture of the Representative of Man transcends verbal language. The human being stands between the polarities of over-expansive Lucifer and over-contracting Ahriman, creating middle ground, space between, and stepping forward into the future. •



A Time to Speak

— ELIZABETH MAJOROS, UNITED STATES, FIRST YEAR

Dart Well Dear Goals....

Twice a week the first year full-time students meet with our speech teacher Barbara Renold to learn and practice the speech exercises that Rudolf Steiner gave the Waldorf school teachers in Stuttgart. Rolling balls and throwing beanbags, walking, lunging, and even prancing, we practice speaking on the breath that is flowing, sending our consonants across the room without dropping even the last word-sounds.

Name neat nuns on nimble moody mules....

We try to open ourselves up so that our whole body is a speech instrument, grounded and centered, but mobile.

Round the rough and rugged rock the ragged rascal ran...

Here in rocky Rockland County, we can easily envision that ragged rascal running. We can hear the difference in our own voices and in each others' when we see first what we are about to speak.

Yo no soy yo...

We also practice poetry, including a poem by the poet Juan Ramón Jiménez in Spanish. Some of us are not native English speakers. Others of us are improving long-held speech habits. All of us are trying new things with our speech and learning to hear ourselves and each other differently in the process. In speaking consciously, we bring the creative, living Word to life in the sounding of our words, borne on our breath, echoing in our surroundings. •

#thespiritprevails

— KATE KENNEDY, UNITED STATES, INTERN

It was an ambitious idea to be sure. The adult program group of Spring Valley, made up of congregation members Dorothea Foerster, Ana Lipkowitz and myself devised a Michaelmas celebration for adults that was new to both us and the community. We would gather up the willing on Michaelmas morning after the service, begin with an open conversation led by Oliver Steinrueck, and then head out to build a life-size sculpture on the lawn of the church.

We had laid out various materials on the lawn for use, mostly metal, wood and cloth, but none of us had any idea of how this would go. Would people show up? Would the conversation fall flat? Would we wind up creating a pile of junk, or worse, not be able to create anything together at all?



Photo by Kate Kennedy 'Michaelmas sculpture'

"Ah," I thought, "so these are some of the anxieties priests live with when they embark on the new." And that was the moment I realized that I was officially in my internship.

As the opening conversation began with people boldly offering their contributions, it occurred to me that we were already tentatively building something together, with the thoughts offered as varied as the materials awaiting us outside. And then, of course, those contributions out of 'left field'* would come, threatening the integrity of what had been built up, inducing some cringes and winces. But then someone else's offering would weave it all back together again, and very subtly an imagination of Michael was in our midst.

We then trekked outside to build our visible imagination together. Some grabbed huge metal pieces, others wood planks, and one a gold star garland. It began in all civility. But unlike inside, where the odd contribution elicited only quiet wincing, out here it called forth bolder measures in some to correct the "mistakes."

The tension that ensued was palpable, and for a split second I wonder if this will all go south. Then came a thought, most likely sent by the very one to whom we were all striving to connect on this day. And it was this: The spirit prevails. We had found each other and Michael inside the church; it had to be possible outside, too.

And indeed it was. Those slighted remained undeterred, and those being corrective loosened up and found a new way in. Joyfully we proceeded together until the imagination we had created inside found its garment and full expression outside on the lawn. And I left knowing the words given me that day would serve as a kind of motto for the rest of my internship, perhaps even for my life. �

At the Altar

- MIMI COLEMAN, UNITED STATES, FIRST YEAR

In attempting to see how to make The Christian Community's relevance transparent, here is a contemplation that helped me to see how the Spirit of Christ can be in me. It starts with an observation of the two altar paintings in the chapel at Chestnut Ridge.

Below is a painting of the crucified Christ where one sees three pieces of wood beside his bowed head and upper body and that is contrasted by the painting above, of the risen Christ where one sees three bright rays of light beside his head.

one is the other is bright opaque dark transparent dead illuminated blockv radiant infinite finite finished active solid ephemeral

I die into my blocky, opaque, solid attempts to reach the other, the Christ in you, and I experience my pain, lack, fear, insecurity, anxiety, unkindness, judgment.

Can I be open and can I accept, am I able to be open-minded enough? Ephata!

I revive in clarity, love, kindness, acceptance, community and recognition. My senses are opened. Light can shine through, in and out. I am transparent to my self and your being can also shine for me. I feel warmth and unconditional love as was given to me. •



Seminarians visiting Ninetta Sombart's house, Dornach

The Temple Bell

— ANA LIPKOWITZ, UNITED STATES, FIRST YEAR



Matthias Giles, 'Baptism'

We are each of us called in a myriad of ways to awaken to our own self-awareness, and following this, what is usually a gradual process of remembrance as to the intention this awakening is meant to accomplish. This re-calling is firstly to ourselves, further to family and friends, and then into the widening sphere of society, the elemental, and the spiritual worlds.

The immersion into a Christian Community seminary training, in part or whole, is fruitful to this process. Let me explore a little as to why this can be so. For most individuals there comes to be necessary a letting go which will transpire in one's personal and/or professional life, in order that there can be forged into existence a setting conducive for study. This may entail relocation and/or

a leaving aside of one's vocation. For everyone involved there is a shedding of inhibition to allow for intimacy to be created with a group of strangers, while for a few there is as well the enormous task of submersion into a language not yet fully learned. Lastly is the task of nurturing one's ability to think into the spiritual world, a method some have only begun to cultivate.

In this, one recalls the words of John the Baptist, I must decrease, so He may increase. Through my active engagement with the Act of Consecration of Man, this 'magic', if you will allow the use of such a word, occurs. It gently transports one to the place which we must collectively venture, if we are to accomplish what is necessary for ourselves and the wider world. It means to be readied for offering in service one's capacities of soul in each moment, thereby, enabling the bringing into being of peace. This reign is a glorious facet of the mission humanity has been set the task of working to establish, and an essential element towards fulfilling what Rudolf Steiner teaches is the goal of Earth existence.

That this be a planet, wherein Love shall be realized. <

The Being-ness of Church

— VICTORIA CAPON, UNITED STATES, INTERN

My first experience of a board meeting in a church of The Christian Community was one that I will never forget. It was early on in my internship and I had met almost everyone in the room at least once before. Attending the staff meeting earlier in the day and then the board meeting that evening, I was struck by how different the mood in the board meeting was to the mood of the staff meeting. In the staff meeting there was a relaxed and friendly atmosphere along with the focus of things that had been done and needed to be done - very task oriented. But in the board meeting the feeling became more refined, almost regal, like I was in the presence of royal servants. The presence of the whole board was much greater than the individuals that made it up. They acted like servants. Their focus was the greater good of the congregation, not themselves, and, perhaps because of that, the feeling in the room was regal - it's the only word I can find to describe it.

Now let me back up. In September, we future interns were given the assignment of holding in our consciousness the question of - "Church," What is it? I have been contemplating this question and an experience I have had is that "Church" is in the relationships that are tended and cared for. Our individual relationship with the divine, our relationship with Christ, builds a "Church," or sheath, based on how we answer the question: "Who do you say that I am?" This relationship also effects and informs our relationship with our Angel, the Angel of the Congregation, and all of our other relationships. When we gather to pray together in the Act of Consecration we build and care for our relationships with each other and the divine. When we work together for the care of the physical church, inside and out, we are building and caring for the sheaths of the "Church". Through this work of

building the living sheaths of the "Church" together, something is renewed and strengthened: the Being of the "Church".

In that first board meeting, sheaths of the Being of the "Church" were being built, strengthened and cared for. •



Victoria Capon, 'Church'

Strengthening the 'I' Within

— WENDY MATUS, UNITED STATES, FIRST YEAR



My first semester in the seminary has presented many gifts. The development of my "I" and integration of the thinking, feeling and willing aspects of my being has changed how I see the world. Rudolf Steiner gave this painting exercise as practice for strengthening the "I" within. Thinking life lives like the flighty bird, feeling life as the courageous big-hearted lion and willing life as the steadfast ox. I feel this vital practice has been a gift, a gift of a stronger "I" that I can now offer back to Christ as he has given himself to me. •

artwork by Wendy Matus

Offering

— ANNA SILBER, UNITED STATES, FIRST YEAR

My body sits still in the chair while my soul walks passing through portals with each crossing until the Book returns the Chalice is revealed and I am called

Standing up through the voice of the Angel acknowledge my strayings, my denials, my weaknesses yet this is not my sacrifice not what I came to offer My gift is the rarest rose blooming in my garden not my weeds

Then the wine and water the smoke the bread the substance He can enter we offer. And with it, no sacrificial lamb - It's my heart now and all the forces of my soul longing

We Say Farewell

--- REV. BASTIAAN BAAN, SEMINARY CO-DIRECTOR

After six years of intensive work at the priest training in North America, we — my wife Æola and I — will return at the end of the year to our homeland, The Netherlands. At an age when people usually begin to withdraw from a full workload and tend to settle and relax more, for me there was no other way than to become more flexible than ever before, in order to adapt to constantly changing circumstances. Life is what happens while you are making other plans. This was the daily reality during these years; a wonderful opportunity to become young, while you are getting old!

Life itself showed step by step the way toward the future. A gradual transition could be realized, beginning with the arrival of Patrick Kennedy, and followed by the installment of Jonah Evans, both as directors of the existing and future seminary.

Never in my life I have experienced so much trust. This trust is partly connected with the qualities of these two colleagues. In daily cooperation with them, I recognize a powerful potency for the future of our priest training. Cooperation is the keyword for the future. 'This is the secret of progress for the future of mankind: to work out of communities.' (Rudolf Steiner, November 23rd, 1905)

But this is not yet the essence of my trust. We all know from experience that human beings, however capable they may be, are still fallible. We all know that unexpected events can shake the status quo, like an earthquake. Through these years of most intensive life – with the students, with my spouse who is a master in selflessness, with my colleagues, with the many congregations that I visited – trust in the spirit has become a reality that is impossible to deny. Each day of our work has brought the confirmation of this reality.

We say farewell with the certainty that the spirit will work with us wherever we go – as long as we work out of communities.

With deep gratitude,

Bastiaan & Æola Baan

PS: The near future will give us opportunities to work together again. In the month of March I hope to return to Spring Valley with the candidates for Priest Ordination.

Save the date: March 30th and 31st! <

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