

# The Christian Community

## North American Newsletter

Volume 18, Nr. 1, Spring 2010,

[www.thechristiancommunity.org](http://www.thechristiancommunity.org)

[www.chicagoseminary.org](http://www.chicagoseminary.org)

### **Greetings from Sabine Krüger**

*Student at the priest seminary in Stuttgart*

I traveled through the US for three months from August to November 2009. On my journey I was able to visit ten of the congregations in your country, and I am thankful that I found a sleeping place in each of them for several days. So some of you might have seen me.



Being back in my home country, I send you many warm greetings from Sweden. I came home with a lot of new impressions and experiences. It was so wonderful and helpful to be in very different surroundings, where everything is new and unknown and where the inner situation becomes an open learning atmosphere. I came as a visitor, but still I had to step inside to really see the new

things and experience the differences to the better-known Europe. And it is for sure that the Americans are not bad to include someone who might feel himself that he is a stranger.

Living here in Germany and Sweden for forty years, I have seen more and more how large an influence the USA has on the world. Somehow the States are important for us. Most of us were, for example, gathered around TVs during the election night 2008, when Barack Obama became the new president.

Yes, we are looking to the west. And we do know something about the States: McDonalds, Starbucks, Burger King...blue jeans and Hollywood movies. Our streets are full of signs of America. But what is behind all this attention that a large part of the world is giving the US? Is there something that America has to give, wants to give to the world, something more than Starbucks etc? This question made me pack my backpack and fly over the Atlantic. What did I find?

I found people who are helpful and friendly, people who openly talk to someone without knowing him or her, people who smile at a stranger, strangers talking to each other in the Metro and laughing. I found a lot of communication. And I found something that I would call an underlying possibility of brotherhood. Yes, there are the very rich people who

can have a lot of money and still look at a neighbor who is starving. But, on the other hand, I really did see people being brothers to each other in the smaller or bigger difficulties in their lives. People were helping each other in a totally natural way. People saw the needs. People were other human beings asking if they could help. And they would DO something about it.



Another thing I was surprised to see so clearly was the relationship Americans have to their government. In Europe, especially in Sweden, we pay a lot of taxes. That makes us feel that we have the right to expect the government to do certain things. If they don't, we can complain. In those cases we feel a bit like: they (the government) are on one side and we are on the other. From what I could experience in the States, it is a bit different. People feel much more as though: this is our State, our common ground, our streets, our Metro. We have to take care of it so that it will be the way we want to have it. WE are responsible for the things. I was for example very surprised how clean and well-kept the Metro is in all the cities in the states I have visited. There are signs that say: "It is federal law that you are not allowed to eat in the Metro". The sign is reporting what agreement we all have with each other, that eating is prohibited here. Laws seem to be our agreements rather than something coming from an invisible force somewhere above us.

The dark side of this is a fear of the government I met in the States, a fear that in my own life, it could gain control of things I want to decide on my own. That kind of freedom seems to be a thing that some Americans even would defend with aggressive power.

So the very good things I met was a brotherhood and a will to take responsibility. But I also met a lack of the middle forces in the people's souls, that place in the inner life that would be able to make a decision if something is right or wrong; the power that would connect a thought and an action in a way that comes out of an inner experience of the actual situation; the ability that would let me try to look behind the outer things and ask about their meaning. And it was painful to see how much damage would happen because of this lack and how much people are suffering because of that. Entertainment and consumerism are trying to occupy the place instead.

I left Europe with a very unclear picture of that foreign country, the United States of America. I came back with a lot of new experiences and the feeling that this country isn't a foreign country. It seems like mankind's big experiment to found a country far away from the old traditions, and as a meeting point for people from all cultures. We are all founding this country and therewith taking a very new step in mankind's history, a step where everything depends on human beings. It is the responsibility of all of us to help, that this experiment might work out well. Then it will be a chance for mankind to go further along

our way to bringing together heaven and earth.

Europe alone can't develop what is needed for the future. The US can't do that either. We need to find the way to each other, to make that happen. America needs something of the middle forces that for a long time it has been Europe's task to develop. Europe can find in America something of the next steps: brotherhood, different cultures, not bound in traditions; not the bloodline making me who I am, but my own I.

On my very last day in the States, when I was visiting the congregation in Washington DC, Rev. Patrick Kennedy asked me: "What would you like to tell the people here after your journey?" My answer: meet Europe, and help more Europeans to visit the States! We, all of us together, need to investigate the Earth and her needs (not only the ecological ones). We are nothing less than one mankind. And as one mankind we have the responsibility for finding the future of the earth.

Thank you all for a time of new and good experiences of a country not so far away.

## **New Initiatives**

*Cindy Hindes*

The Future Initiatives Group recently held a two day meeting in Los Angeles. We met with the congregation—something we are planning to do with every congregation in the course of 2010. We want to experience first hand from the congregations what The Christian Community does well, and what we as a movement for religious renewal want to do more of. (We have also met with the congregation in Washington, DC. Vancouver's next.)



In Los Angeles, the Future Initiatives Group forged links with the Regional Board through its representative, Rachael Flug. We furthered plans toward a lecture tour by priests to areas outside of the main congregations. We are also enthusiastically suggesting that each congregation take advantage of the possibility of having workshops offered around home death care (see article below). This work is being taken up strongly in the Taconic Berkshire community. Such "Sacred Undertakings' work is a frontier in which religious renewal and threshold work can create a wonderful and natural partnership. And Carol Kelly is offering music workshops in support of congregational singing.

We are also in the final stages (ie. arranging funding) for preparing to renovate The Christian Community's web site. Several people,

both priests and lay people, are working on this. The results, which we hope will be visible in the summer, will be much more interactive, useful, and esthetically pleasing.

We are also developing a list of possible projects of benefit to the whole of North America to work on in the future; possibilities such as creating a collection of congregational music, or suggestions and materials for the religious life in the home of the pre-school child. Or supporting regional conferences.

We would love to hear from you—what do you think The Christian Community does well? Where are we strong? What would you like more of? How can we help?

Send suggestions to Cindy Hindes, 10029 Densmore Ave., North Hills, CA 91343 [chindes@yakmilk.com](mailto:chindes@yakmilk.com) You can also contact her or Oliver Steinrueck, [osteinrueck@gmail.com](mailto:osteinrueck@gmail.com) about donating financial support for such projects.

*Cindy Hindes is a priest working in Los Angeles and a member of the Future Initiatives Group.*

## **Bringing After-Death Care Back Home –**

### **How Families Can Care for Their Own**

*Ann Elizabeth Barnes*

*From our perspective, death appears as disintegration.... From the other side, however, death appears as the brightest beginning of spiritual life, as something that radiates sun-like over the entire life between death and a new life.*  
*R. Steiner*



Death is a natural experience, a transition we all face. In the past, families and the communities surrounding them took care of the arrangements themselves. That simple tradition is still possible in most states. Caring for a loved one at home is a dignified and loving alternative to current funeral practices.

The Christian Community, working with Rev. Carol Kelly from The Christian Community in Spring Valley, NY, and Ann-Elizabeth Barnes and Jonitha Hasse of “Sacred Undertaking, a Family Partnership” will be offering workshops on after-death care, including what is possible and legal in the United States. The focus is on learning how to create a meaningful experience at the time of a loved one’s death, how to keep one’s loved one at home and to invite simplicity and sanctity to perme-

ate this time of transition.

If you or your congregation are interested in hosting a workshop, please contact Rev. Carol Kelly at [caroltkelly@juno.com](mailto:caroltkelly@juno.com); or Ann-Elizabeth Barnes at [annelizbarnes@gmail.com](mailto:annelizbarnes@gmail.com) or call Jonitha Hasse at (518) 325-7454.

## Welcome to Craig Wiggins

The most recent addition to the North American priest circle is Craig Wiggins, who has been working in Devon, PA since Advent 2009. Born in Missouri in 1953, Craig studied German, 'for reasons unbeknownst to me at the time' at the University of Missouri. In his early twenties, he lived in Chicago and Detroit 'in a semi-monastic setting, studying esoteric Christianity and working in the Sears Tower as a messenger for a law firm and in Detroit as a cook's helper.' In his mid twenties, he moved to Cologne, Germany where he married and the first of his four children was born. He worked there as a translator and teacher of German. He became acquainted with anthroposophy and The Christian Community when he moved to Amsterdam at 30, where he worked as office manager in a publishing firm. He was ordained in 1992 at 38, and has since worked in several congregations in Holland. He loves congregational work, youth camps and conferences, showing purebred dogs, translation work, and is intensely interested in the building up of The Christian Community in the Ukraine and Columbia.



## Christian Community Summer Camps

East Coast, PA, August 5 - 21. Contact Carol Kelly 845-426-3144

West Coast CA, June 27 - July 14, contact Sanford Miller 916-548-4224

Wisconsin, contact Richard Dancey, 773-506-0963

# Holy Week Retreat at the Chicago Seminary



*painting by Marcus Knausenberger*

## **The Living Cross**

'Casting the Shadow of the Cross on the Greening Earth'  
March 29-April 4, 2010

The Cross in His Story – The Cross in History, Richard Dancey  
Vertical and Horizontal - The Cross in Us – The Cross in the World,  
Gisela Wielki

Every day Act of Consecration, contributions and conversations on the theme, artistic activities and presentations, cultural events in the city.

Cost: \$300 for the week with accommodations, breakfast and light supper (lunch in neighborhood restaurants).

\$175 without accommodations

In case of financial hardship, please pay what you can.

For registration (no later than March 24th) and more information, contact Gisela Wielki at 773 472 7041; or: [info@chicagoseminary.org](mailto:info@chicagoseminary.org)

## Message for Youth—FutureNow!

Dear Young Folks,

I heard you had once again a great Winter conference in Spring Valley. Here are some more good things happening out there.

If you are off between May 13th and May 25th, you may want to think about packing your bags and traveling to Germany. There is an International Christian Community Congress happening in Dortmund, called FutureNow2010, May 21-25th. You can go to their website, [www.futurenow2010.org](http://www.futurenow2010.org), click on the right side of the home page above the photo for English, and then check out all the links. They expect some 1500 people, many of them young people with special programs and activities for young people in different languages, English obviously being one of them. (Jake they have night cafes for the young folks and need just your kind of music!!! and Meaghen, your improvisation acting skills.)

To make the trip worthwhile, prior to the congress there is the opportunity to experience a Priest ordination in Stuttgart, (May 15-16th) followed by an Open Week at the Stuttgart seminary, May 17-21st. Classes for the week will be conducted in English, before you travel to Dortmund with lots of other young people and after that you can continue to travel on your own, or return to do 'serious', money producing summer work at home, before going back to college or some other job.

Such a congress does not come around too often, so if I have sparked your interest at all, in one or all of these events, get in touch with me, [giselawielki@sbcglobal.net](mailto:giselawielki@sbcglobal.net) and then we can look into financial travel assistance.

They really want some young representatives from the US!!! and I am trying to gather a group that will travel with me. Please, do pass this on to other young people.



Just recently they were still working on a weblink/site for just the activities and the program for the young people, so that may not yet be up, but it should be very shortly. I can keep you posted on this, once you let me know that you are interested.

That's all for now, Gisela (Wielki)

**P.S. This conference is not just for youth, but for all ages!**  
**[futurenow2010.org](http://futurenow2010.org)**



# Sexuality and Consciousness Young Adult

**Conference** with Lisa Romero, and Revs Jonah Evans, Carol Kelly and Richard Dancey

*Jessica Mansbach*

The Sexuality and Consciousness Young Adult Conference began in a mood of shy discretion as we all wondered what this weekend would be about. What does Anthroposophy have to say about sexuality, or sex for that matter? Why do we even have masculine and feminine polarities? What are we to understand by the signs of the times?

Lisa Romero, anthroposophical healthcare practitioner and teacher, guided us on our way; we plucked up our courage and set out with our questions. We realized it is important to distinguish between the terms: "man and woman," that which results from our biology, and the feminine and masculine principles, which are the creative principles within those bodies. With humor and sincerity, Lisa led us through the phenomena we experience in the intimate interplay between men and women.



We typically identify with our body and/or with our emotions. Beyond our physical and feeling bodies is the "I," which is ultimately genderless, eternal and evolving. Thus we can ask: "Is there a purpose to having a masculine and a feminine? Does a gendered experience serve only our transient earthliness or does it serve our eternal I?" Lisa gave insight to harmonize and come to terms with the present earthly gendered experience, but always guided our attention back to our eternal selves. "It is not the human purpose to fulfill your pleasure centers," she reminded us.

In response to the one-sided view of our gendered-ness, from the portrayal of "real" men and women via the media, to the politics of the battle of the sexes, we strove instead to build pictures of the masculine and feminine polarities in service to our eternal I. The masculine principle, we learned, has a center, a focus; it is concentrated consciousness, and it says "I am an I." The feminine principle is peripheral, with an expanded consciousness that is receptive, open, and devotional. While patriarchy has shed blood and tears across history, as a step in our human evolution, the principle within it had to precede the feminine. Humanity needed the masculine principle to come to its own being, to develop a sense of self to be given over in devotion to the spiritual world. Today, in our society and also in our personal relationships, when we wake up to the imbalance of the masculine and feminine, we are ready to open our concentrated "me" selves to the other and to the spirit.



The conference included thoughtful contributions from Reverends Jonah Evans, Carol Kelly and Richard Dancey. We were very grateful for the support and courage of the priests of the Christian Community in taking up this theme with us. We also delighted in an improv performance by Walking the Dog Theater on Sunday night, which let us breathe out in robust laughter after so much sober building of ideals!

We left with new questions in our souls, "Am I looking at the gender of the other, or am I looking to their eternal self?" "In relationship, do I lose myself? -Then practice taking hold." "Can I experience what occurs in the inner life of another? -Practice devotion." We are empowered to *know*, to know what is at play in our attractions, antipathies, lusts and recognition of another by asking "who is choosing this in me?" A gift to many this weekend was the budding awareness of their I. "Whatever you give your attention to, you feed it and it grows."

To hear Lisa Romero's talk, please go to the podcast: <http://www.westrive.org/content/lisa-romero-sexuality-consciousness>

*Article used with permission from WeStrive.org*



## **Siberia**

*Galina Viktorova-Fin*

The dream to go to Siberia and see Lake Baikal was born in my childhood through the stories of my grandmother. She spoke of many faithful believers from our village who went to Siberia after the Russian revolution in order to keep their faith and achieve salvation at the end of time.

This became a riddle for me: how could faith save her at the end of time if she had already prepared herself for death by sewing clothes for her funeral?

The spark of this dream stayed alive and flickered in my heart throughout my life. Gradually, this dream turned into the idea of bringing a priest from the Christian Community to Irkutsk, Siberia so that the people and elemental beings there would experience the Act of Consecration of Man. An idea to plant the seed of new faith in Siberia from whence will come salvation.

Stories are told quickly, but the actions within them take time.

Despite all the hindrances and difficulties involved in finding people, contact information and funds, five people including myself eventually traveled to Irkutsk, Siberia to bring Anthroposophical lectures and

workshops to the people there.

Unfortunately, there was no priest from the Christian Community with us. I was told that the idea to celebrate the Act of Consecration of Man and the impulse to hear and experience it must be born in the hearts of the people of Siberia, and not be brought to them by someone from outside.

In Russia, those from Siberia are traditionally regarded as good people. The warmth of their hearts touched us the moment we landed in the airport and stayed with us throughout our journey.



*Taikal Forest, Irkutsk*

The first place we visited was a Camphill village where 50 people lived and worked. Located 30 km from the city of Irkutsk, this village was surrounded by forests of birch trees with mushrooms and berries, and meadows full of flowers. It seemed to me that this place had no boundaries surrounding it and stretched on into the adjacent land.

Before the "Perestroika", this village was an army base filled with ICBMs (inter-continental ballistic missiles) and a few houses for soldiers. All that remains now are a few of those soldier's houses, which are now used by the villagers.

Tatiana Kokina, the founder of this community said "without the help of people from Scandinavia at the beginning, we would not have overcome all of our difficulties. But here there is always a double rainbow above our heads that ignites our spirits to press on."

Another affiliated Camphill is a large house with ten bedrooms, and exists as a grant from the municipality. Twenty people live, work, and teach those with disabilities from surrounding villages how to weave, build toys, sewing and other skills.

The Waldorf School, where our workshops were held for three and a half days, has eight grades with about a hundred students. We were warmly welcomed by them.

After three days of running exhausting workshops, we traveled to a unique island in Lake Baikal called Olchon. This island emanates very strong spiritual vibrations, forces, and currents which when exposed to, can be compared to having sunstroke. Our hosts at this island was a clan of Shaman. The head of this clan, a man named Yuri, performed

a Shamanistic ritual when I asked him to tell me more about his religion.

The most important part of this experience for me was interacting with the people I met.

The questions they asked about our lectures, their thoughts during the workshops, and the many conversations I had allowed me to learn of the important searching questions that were in their hearts. I was in awe of the depths of these questions, and many times I was speechless. It is difficult for me to condense all of what I experienced into one paragraph, so I would like to write about this again so I can go into more detail.



*Shaman Rock, Olchon Island, Lake Baikal*

*Galina Viktorova-Fin is a Christian Community member in Toronto.*

## **The Christian Community Council**

Reinhard Rosch

The Council is the representative body of the "Foundation, The Christian Community International", which has its seat in the Netherlands. All regions in the world where The Christian Community exists in a formal way are entitled to send a representative to the Council meeting. The Council accepts the year-end financial statements of the Foundation, and also acts as a communications channel to and from the Foundation. There were regional reports from France, Germany, Netherlands, Switzerland, Austria, Spanish-speaking congregations, North America, Australia and New Zealand, and Nordic countries. The Christian Community Council met in Söcking, near Munich, Germany in Sept 2009.

This year's topic was requested by the Seminaries for their work in evaluating new directions in curriculum development, and was, loosely translated: The Path into the Future for The Christian Community- What needs to change? -- Where do we need to change? --An accounting of where we are thirteen years before the 100th anniversary of the founding of The Christian Community.

We tried to take into account both our strengths and weaknesses. In our discussions we noted that we need to be interested in the world, if

we want the world to be interested in us. How do we have to behave so that we are not a hindrance for those who seek? We need to open doors for people to experience ritual. Opportunities open up when we meet with the others; do we make the best use of them? Several fruitful areas of work were identified: youth work, threshold circles, leadership, sacraments, blended families. How can we read our tasks from the events of our time? How can we realize our ideas? How can we satisfy the need for community?

We split into four groups to work on the topic. We worked with the objective of giving the seminary leaders something to take home for their work in the area of curriculum development. The results, in short form were:

Group I: if we react (to the world), we will always lag one step behind; if we act, we can become contemporaries and co-creators. Question: how can we "mission" without becoming missionaries?

Group II Technology can become a hindrance to incarnation; create technology-free sanctuaries. Regarding sexuality, there is a need for knowledge, consciousness, correct Eros. Regarding money: developing a proper attitude towards money; rich vs. poor thinking; three-folding within The Christian Community

Group III What flows from the ritual into the world? How can we open doors to ritual? How can we nurture religious feelings? What is the need for and purpose of ritual? Can we introduce our ritual (before first exposure!), and explain our ritual?

Group IV How are our attitude and bearing perceived? Do we have tendencies to behave like a sect? Changing ourselves: acting out of necessity vs. out of free will. Where are changes actually possible and desirable? Should we have exercises and a path of spiritual development? Where and how should we confess our beliefs, and talk about the service? To build vs. to inherit: *"What you inherited from previous generations, you must earn (or re-build) before you truly own it."* Goethe

The Foundation's websites in German and in English are almost completed; there is a legal requirement to state who is legally responsible for content. More work needs to be done in the areas of continuing education, outreach, and dialoguing with the world. **In May 2010, in Dortmund, Germany a Christian Community world-wide convention will take place with the motto: "Future Now". Extensive information can be found at [www.futurenow2010.org](http://www.futurenow2010.org).**

*Reinhard Rosch, from Ottawa, Canada, is a member of the North American Regional Board and the region's representative to the Council.*