

North American Newsletter

Vol. 21, Nr. 1, Spring 2012

www.thechristiancommunity.org

www.christiancommunityseminary.org

www.facebook.com/thechristiancommunity

<http://ccyouth.homestead.com>

NEW SEMINARY DIRECTOR: BASTIAAN BAAN

The North American Seminary of The Christian Community in Chestnut Ridge NY has a new director, Bastiaan Baan. He and his wife have recently moved to the United States from the Netherlands. He succeeds Gisela Wielki, who has been the director since its inception in Chicago.



The seminary training toward priesthood is a three-year program. Two years of course work is followed in the third year by internships in congregations, hospitals or other social institutions, here or abroad. The final semester prepares candidates for ordination. Acceptance into each semester is based on conversation and evaluation of the student together with the seminary leadership. There is no grading system, but after each semester both the student and the seminary leadership decide whether the student should continue with the training. Study at the seminary is no guarantee of acceptance into the ordination semester.

The first year can be taken as a Foundation year, an introduction into Anthroposophy and the task and work of The Christian Community, Movement for Religious Renewal. Students with a variety of educational, career and spiritual backgrounds are welcome. Some acquaintance with The Christian Community or anthroposophy is expected. In most cases, applicants over the age of 28 are expected to have a college degree or vocational training.

The seminary also offers retreat weeks and some courses open to members and friends. (See schedule on page 3).•

AN EASTER RETREAT

An Easter retreat is being offered at The Christian Community, 906 Divisadero San Francisco, CA on Saturday, March 23, 2013, 10 AM – 4 PM

Talks, Conversation and Singing (Robin Elliott Dagg)

Themes: "Who do you say that I AM?" (Craig Wiggins) and "The Harrowing of Hell: a Redemptive Journey into the Interior of the Earth" (MariJo Rogers)

RSVP requested: craig@wiggins.nl or



Descent into Hell, Fra Angelico

SUMMER RETREAT: SAINT PAUL AND EARLY CHRISTIANITY

A contemplative summer retreat at The Christian Community in the beautiful Taconic/Berkshire region Monday, July 29 to August 2, 2013 with Rev. Franziska Hesse and Rev. Julia Polter.

Bring your own tent (some indoor housing will also be available), good weather, and a willingness to pitch in and cook the meals together; all while living into the beginnings of Christianity and the work of Paul. The day will begin with the Act of Consecration of Man and end with a close of day service. We will share presentations, conversations and joint study of some aspects of the letters of Paul. We will be offering eurythmy and nature drawing, formal and informal singing, and there will be plenty of time for swimming, hiking and resting. You may arrive earlier or stay later to explore hiking paths and participate in the many cultural offerings in the area during the summer months. We will let you know what our basic costs are and let you decide what you can contribute in support of what is being offered and for the ongoing work of the Christian Community.



For more information and to sign up please contact: Rev. Franziska Hesse
Phone: 518-325-6749 franziskahesse@gmail.com •

2013 OPEN COURSES

Week-long Retreats at the Seminary

February 11 - 15, 2013. **At the Dawn of the Consciousness Soul.** Karl Fredrickson. This year marks the six-hundredth anniversary of the beginning of our present cultural epoch, when the consciousness-soul is destined to unfold in humanity. Accompanying the exuberant blossoming of intellectual faculties that Rudolf Steiner indicates in the final chapter of Esoteric Science: An Outline, there has also been flowing, "quite unnoticed," a "hidden knowledge," a "concealed knowledge of the Grail."

March 18 - 22. **End-of Life-Decisions: Ethical, Social, and Religious Perspectives.** Hans van Delden, MD, PhD Professor of Medical Ethics, Utrecht University, The Netherlands and Rev. Bastiaan Baan, Seminary Director This course aims at helping individuals develop informed moral choices in meeting end-of-life decisions. Each day will offer a 90-minute lecture and another 75-minute session during which questions relating to the evening lectures and to personal experiences can be discussed. Themes include the decision not to treat, advance-care planning and palliative care, palliative sedation, and physician assisted death.

April 8 - 12, **Spiritual Hygiene and the Healing of the Soul: A Practical Approach.** Sebastian Lorenz, MD, MPA, LLM, Germany

April 29 - May 3, **Who is Christian Rosenkretz?** Rev. Bastiaan Baan, Spring Valley, Seminary Director, formerly The Netherlands

Open Courses take place at The Christian Community, 15 Margetts Rd., Chestnut Ridge, NY 10952. Lodging: Please arrange with Holder House: holderhouse@threefold.org. Or contact the seminary if you would like to be housed with someone from the congregation. The nearest airport is Newark, NJ.

For more information, the daily schedule and to register, please contact: Rev. Gisela Wielki, 15 Margetts Rd., Chestnut Ridge, NY 10952 Tel. 212-877-0208 Email: info@christiancommunityseminary.org, www.christiancommunityseminary.org •



The Polish Rider, Rembrandt

ON GIVING A BLESSING FOR SAME-GENDER PARTNERSHIPS

To initiate discussion on the subject of 'The Christian Community and Homosexuality'

The following article was written by Dr. Nail Michael el Arif, MD and was published in Perspectives, The Christian Community's Journal in England. (Translation by Rev. Aaron Mirkin). By way of introduction: in the following article, a subject is introduced which has not gotten much, if any, attention in our circles, although public opinion has been looking at this topic for several years. Please regard this article, which originally appeared The Christian Community's German journal "Die Christengemeinschaft" in November 2012, as the beginning of what can become a fruitful exchange of ideas, questions and insights. Dr. Nail Michael el Arif is a psychiatrist and member of our congregation in Freiburg/Germany. If you would like to enter into dialogue on this topic, you are warmly encouraged to contact Rev. Craig Wiggins: craig@wiggins.nl or by mail at 906 Divisadero / San Francisco, CA 94115.

About ten years ago I asked the Circle of Seven, the body which leads The Christian Community, if it would be possible within The Christian Community to have a blessing given for my own and my life partner's partnership. We have now been together for more than 20 years.

The correspondence that followed continued for just over two years. It was fair and friendly but ended in a definite No. I then suggested that the existing form of the Close of Day service be used. The priest might use her or his own words in the Close of Day Address, and we, as a couple, might exchange rings, make our vows to each other, and so on, taking personal responsibility for the words spoken. The Christian Community would provide the setting and ritual context for the occasion. But even this was not possible then. It was extremely painful for me. With the help of others, my partner and I then found our own form of marriage rite, which we used in 2004. Disappointment in the 'Movement for Religious Renewal' and doubt as to whether it deserves that name, remained.

The 'Future Now' Christian Community's international Whitsun Congress in Dortmund in 2010 included a workshop on homosexuality. This gave me new hope after a period of resignation; hope that our church may be capable of change. An initiative arose and led to a conference in June 2012. I want to tell you about this. People of all ages, occupations and genders came together (including Christian Community priests who are themselves in same-gender relationships). Among them were also people who were not directly 'affected' (a term used with some self-irony over and over again during the conference). The life experience of those who attended showed wide variance in the way in which people in The Christian Community dealt with their experiences and their homosexuality. Some struggled to hold

back their tears, even as adults, as they told of extremely difficult experiences with priests and members of the congregation when in their young days they had taken the risk of admitting to their homosexuality (including attempts to 'cure' this putative disease). Others reported positive responses they had met with, and everything in between.

The priests reported that The Christian Community has now instituted a blessing for partnerships. The Circle of Seven had appointed a commission called the Blessings Group. At the group's suggestion, the Circle of Seven have now decided that any priest may give a blessing of the kind I outlined above (Close of Day service, Address of a suitable kind, and elements given an individual form that may precede or follow these).

It became clear during the conference that the form, which originally seemed to us to be more of a 'second-class marriage' or indeed discriminatory, may after all be the right one for the time being. It does not merely leave room for individual elements but actually demands them. The fact that apart from the Close of Day service there is no established rite means that every couple must work with the priest to create their words, form and content, or at least decide to adopt contents from couples that have gone before them, in so far as these are available. In time these may then contribute to the creation of a partnership blessing rite. And with more and more people having delicate antennae for things of the spirit, we can try and sense if the spiritual world felt it to have been right or not. The next couple might then take it up and develop it further.

Most of us who love someone of the same gender have never been able simply to be ourselves. We have had to consciously face up to everything usual, traditional and 'normal' and realize that we do not fit into those categories, but must consciously go our own way. We cannot take it as a matter of course that our love for another will be welcomed by others. Unfortunately.

Our next step may be that we meet once a year to continue work on these issues. The point is that love between two people, irrespective of their sexual orientation, deserves our respect, goodwill and support. And to create a rite worthy of the love between people of the same gender, making sure that the rite is practised in a living way.

As to what you, dear reader, can do with regard to this? You might talk about this in your congregation. You might consider how you would react as a congregation if a couple were to come and ask for a partnership blessing in your church. You might ask your priest if he or she knows of the blessing celebration and would be prepared to perform the ceremony. Small steps? Yes. But can we afford to remain at a standstill? •

2013 WINTER YOUTH CONFERENCE

MARTIN LUTHER KING JR. SERVICE WEEKEND



In Washington DC, Friday January 18, 2013, our youth group headed to the annual regional Winter Youth Conference in Washington DC. Thirty-eight youth came from the Midwest, from Spring Valley and Hillsdale NY, and Washington, DC. The theme of the conference was "Impossible? The Unlimited Potential and Power of Human Spirit". The program included conversations, games, singing, city action and service work. We did service work in the DC community Parish House. We also went to the Ideal Academy Public Charter School for service work where we painted the school's walls. Singing was an important part of this conference. After our service work at the Acad-

emy, we sang for those who were present. There, our singing was recorded and we were interviewed by Testimony TV.

On Sunday, we went to the city, and the youth, divided in groups of three, asked the pedestrians three questions: "What is your guiding star?" "What does service mean to you?" and "What gives you courage to realize your dreams?" Afterwards, we walked up to the Washington Memorial and participated in representing different themes through silent action, a picture of which you will find on January 21st edition of Washington Post.

On Inauguration Day, we were at the Lincoln Memorial by sunrise and sang there at the steps near where in 1963 Dr. Martin Luther King delivered his "I Have a Dream" speech. We later found out that Don Gonyea from NPR was recording our singing, which was broadcast that same day (entitled: "Lincoln Memorial A Doubly Powerful Place On Inauguration Day"). During one of our conversations, one of the youth captured the joyous and passionate mood of the conference by renaming the theme of our conference as "Impossible?!? I am Possible!." •

To read or listen to the NPR interview of the youth, <http://www.npr.org/2013/01/21/169920884/lincoln-memorial-a-doubly-powerful-place-on-inauguration-day?sc=17&f=2>

Or go to the NPR website www.NPR.org and type Gonyea, Jan 21, 2013 in their search box.

To read/hear an NPR interview with Rev Patrick Kennedy on that day. <http://www.npr.org/2013/01/22/169950222/generations-trek-to-the-mall-to-hear-obamas-speech?sc=17&f=3>, or go to www.NPR.org and type Greene, Inskeep, Rev. Patrick Kennedy in their search box. •

HOLY NIGHTS RETREAT IN DC

Jane Johnson

The following verse and a picture of the Divine Mary/Sophia was handed to us at the beginning of this years Holy Nights Study. What follows after the verse, is at best, a small peek into the vast riches that we are able to share with the work of ourselves, with our priests.

*I see you in a thousand pictures,
Maria, in liveliness portrayed.
But none is able to depict you
The way my soul beholds you.*

*I only know what worldly tumult
Disperse like a dream since then.
And an unspeakably sweet heaven
Stands in my deepest heart always. (Novalis)*



Raphael, Madonna Terranova

We put our attention on discerning the divine being who is/was Mary-Sophia.

You can imagine given twelve mornings of exploration, our hearts, souls and spirits went to work on revealing this mystery Being, in the everyday and in the absolutely sacred. We wove between the micro and the macro, this weaving between the vast beingness we know as the Sophia, and the simple maid known as Mary.

This will be challenging to convey with mere words: but here goes! Considerable time was taken to explore the existence of the two Mary's, the two Josephs and the two Jesus children. We worked with the Luke and Matthew Gospels, Rudolf Steiner and Emil Bock, and Raphael paintings.

In the study time, essential knowledge wisdom was brought into greater clarity and understanding of the necessity of Mary, beyond being his birth mother, in particular, from the John Gospel of the Wedding at Cana, (John 2: 1-11) "As the wine ran short, the mother of Jesus says to him, 'They have no more wine.' And Jesus answers her, 'Pay heed woman, to the power which flows between me and you. My own hour has not yet come.'

A transfer of sorts occurred at this moment, from the being of Christ to the being of Mary; he had to make his being available for what was coming. Some of his being was then given over to her; their relationship, their destiny became linked, inextricably. This was a turning point in the relationship of who she became for the world. Her capacities grew; she became the Divine Sophia; Christ working in her. •

“Evil as a Challenge:

A Manichaean Journey to the Heart of Our Time”

Review of a workshop with Christine Gruwez

Larry Temple

On the second weekend in October, Michaelmas 2012, 30-plus men and women gathered in the chapel of the Christian Community in San Francisco, California to participate in a workshop/seminar on the third century Christian initiate and teacher, Mani, and the teachings of Manichaeism on the redemption of evil.

Belgian anthroposophist and author Christina Gruwez led us through a review of the historical Mani and what anthroposophy says about him. She reviewed his teachings and the spread of Manichaeism, from his home in Persia, westward across North Africa into Southern Europe and eastward along the Silk Road all the way into China. It was a vital and widely practiced stream of Christianity from the third century AD until it was declared heresy by the Roman Church and eventually totally wiped out, exoterically, by the 13th century. Rudolf Steiner pointed out that this was necessary at that time, for Manicheism was not ready to be caught in form. It was and is a teaching and a practice related to our time, when the mysteries of evil need to be understood, also as a preparation for the next epoch. The primary emphasis of the workshop was on how we can work with Mani’s teaching about the creation of the world; about the ongoing evolution of humanity within the context of the relationship between light and darkness, often thought of as good and evil; and to realize how it is that we humans are responsible for helping heal all that results from the conflict seemingly inherent in this duality.

As Christina told us, Mani’s creation story begins with Light and Darkness, both already there but asleep, unaware of themselves or each other. Darkness awakens first, becoming aware of Light, and immediately desires to hold or capture the Light. Thus, with this attack, Light too awakens. Being the Light, it will not fight (for that would be Dark); rather a Being comes forth from the Light, embodying the Light, chooses to go into the Darkness as emissary, and is there devoured, torn completely apart. Thus a new substance is created, a mixture of Darkness and Light out of which everything in existence will be created.

Thus it is that Man is created a mixture of Darkness and Light. Despair



The Milky Way, a 'C

comes from this. But human beings are told that it is our task to distinguish the Light and Dark in ourselves and in the world; and in beholding the Darkness, accepting it and purifying ourselves in relation to it, we will be able to transform it and, in so doing, pour the transformed substance into a Column of Glory that reaches forward into a new world that we are thus helping to create.



Column of Glory'

We began a conversation on how it is that we discern good and evil in ourselves and in the world. Mani's teaching, like Rudolf Steiner's, is that the question needs to be, not what, but who? How do we know that a being is involved? Because there is activity. So it is that we get to know beings through their activities, looking at the results: are they healthy (i.e. good and of the light) or are they unhealthy (i.e. evil or of the darkness)?

Through anthroposophy we know that in the present age of the consciousness or spiritual soul, we are all being initiated into the mysteries of evil's working. Thus do we need an understanding of the Manichae-an stream of Christianity, which teaches the evolutionary purpose of the transformation of evil.

To show how this transformation is to be accomplished, the three Manichae-an vows were shared with us: 1) Keep one's speaking and thinking pure. Do not break the integral whole of what one is able to observe. Even the truth can be spoken in such a way as to disrupt. 2) With all one's actions, stay aware of the whole; be non-disruptive. 3) With one's feelings also stay connected to awareness of the whole, holding whatever is felt in objectivity. Purity is attained through this inclusion of all that exists. "The whole" in this case means radical inclusivity of all that is, no divisiveness, no rejection of any part, inclusive of evil and darkness. No part is to be left out by our thinking, feeling or willing; in the non-reactivity, the intention to hold whatever is happening in awareness of the whole, comes the purification.

I went away from this weekend with a deepened awareness of my part in helping to realize what Mani and Christ intend regarding our relationship to darkness and light/ evil and goodness, within earth evolution. I came away strengthened with method and at peace with life as it is, everything and everyone, myself included, made up of darkness and light, evil and good. As Rudolf Steiner says in his mystery plays: in the long view evil serves good or will do so through our conscious ongoing activity in evolution. Christianity is indeed the religion of evolution and Mani is one of its great servants. •

See article below for another upcoming workshop on the theme.

WALKING WITH YOUR TIME

Transparency as a Manichean Way of Resistance

Workshop by Christine Gruwez

April 19–21, 2013 • Chestnut Ridge, NY

To shine through is not to overcome darkness and to wipe it out. It is not a matter of victory. To shine through means allowing oneself to be “broken” by the forces of opposition, just as bread has to be broken in order to be distributed. The challenge of our times is exactly this: to welcome the forces of opposition as a step towards transparency; and in the process of becoming transparent, to start to feel the contours of our times with a deep gentleness of heart.

Christine Gruwez has followed the history of Mani and his communities throughout the Far and Near East, from the Balkans to North Africa, Iran, Uzbekistan and Tajikistan, along the Silk Road to Japan. Her book, *Walking with Your Time: A Manichaean Journey*, addresses how to become a contemporary human being and the question of good and evil in our time.

For more information on this workshop, contact Lory Widmer, Threefold Educational Center, 845.352.5020 x18, events@threefold.org / www.threefold.org •

COLLABORATIVE POETRY

Here are short poems that were written by members of the Washington-Baltimore community, on 9.16.2012, the 90th anniversary of our movement. They were written in tandem - two people, working together. The limits were to write seven line poems with 1,2,3,4,3,2,1 words in each successive line, alternating lines with your partner. So if the first person wrote the first line (one word), the partner wrote the next (two words). The second limit was to avoid using any names and search for descriptive words and qualities.



Angels, Richard Kroft

You
are woven
in every breath
the earth sings forth
your heart lifts
angel wings
heavenward



Inset, *The Risen One*, Gruenewald

I
live fully
in the light
of each dear soul
one and many
voices sounding
ring

Touch
with blessing
all the ways
warmth flows around us
as we raise
our hearts
high

RUDOLF FRIELING

*in The Hope of the World
Aphorisms and Contemplations*

"Humanity before Christ was oriented towards the creation of the world, was ensouled by its fading tones. This ancient heritage is becoming used up. It is time for the realization that something completely new started with Christ and the deed of Golgotha. This represents more than just the establishment of a new religion; this is an event which can be set in importance alongside the creation of the world itself, as the second chapter, we might say, of the development of mankind towards becoming true human beings. In new ways, the divine can flow to a mankind grown independent; can flow from the great "I" of Christ to the little "I" of human beings, if they voluntarily make themselves accessible to this stream. When the penetration of Christ begins to reach deeper layers of the soul, the scorched earth of human feeling can be newly tilled and planted." •

This book is available at Steinerbooks.com

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Our North American Christian Community website now includes a new Calendar feature. Many events of possible interest are posted, such as a continuing series in Chicago on the sources of violence, a workshop on planning around end of life in Los Angeles, (and the similarly themed Open Course at the Seminary) and a Passiontide conference in Boston concerning hope and encountering evil. This is just a sampling. Be sure to check it out regularly, as new events are continuously being posted. •

www.thechristiancommunity.org/events



Icon St. Thomas

The North American Newsletter of The Christian Community is published three times a year, spring, summer and fall. To submit articles (600 words or less) or announcements, contact Rev. Cynthia Hindes, cindy.hindes@gmail.com, or 818 893.0668.