

## North American Newsletter, Autumn 2022

# 100 Years of Christian Community

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Sermon given on our Movement's Birthday, September 16th, by Rev. Peter Skaller

*And behold, a certain scholar of the Law stood up and put Him to the test, saying, "Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?" And He said to him, "What is written in the Law? How does it read to you?" And he answered, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength, and with all your mind; and your neighbor as yourself." And He said to him, "You have answered correctly; do this and you will live." Luke 10:25-28 (Then follows the story of The Good Samaritan.)*

The full name of our church includes the sub-title, Movement for Religious Renewal. The core newness which was brought 100 years ago, and which continues, resides in the incorporation of Rudolf Steiner's deep insights into the nature of the world and the Deed of Christ, along with the magnificent, and modern reworking of the form and language of the seven Christian sacraments. From the original German, only 100 years ago, our sacraments are now spoken in 20 languages, and countless books, lectures, and workshops, also in many languages, explore what for classic Christianity are often radically new and perhaps even heretical understandings of the gospels. There has really been a lightning-fast spread of renewal out into the world.

But now what? Is 'renewal' to be a continual process, or is it to simply be the continuation of the spread of what was given 100 years ago? Is membership growth, new church buildings and books, important as they are, all that is meant by renewal for today? The fundamentals of the world are changing at a breathtaking pace as we all experience. Many of these changes are bringing, and will surely bring, difficult challenges for humanity. Must anything in The Christian Community change in order to meet this future creatively? This question is being wrestled with throughout our movement.

All evolution, whether biological or spiritual, takes place via the dynamic of dissatisfaction with, or perhaps better said, the insufficiency of present conditions and the searching for new ways of being. And so, at our 100 year millennium, we can rightly ask: Are we satisfied with where The Christian Community is? Is there anything in our approach needing improvement, augmentation, or even fundamental change in ways that can better further both the world's and our personal, individual evolutions?

However we wrestle with this, it would be good to maintain sight of the encounter between Jesus and the expert in the Law described in Luke 10. It contains what has always been the core teaching, the core striving, of the Christian religion, going back to ancient times, regardless of the many branches that have arisen, including ours. This teaching has not changed, and never

will. The evolution of the church and its individual members, and indeed the world itself, ultimately depends on this twofold striving: increasing our capacity to love God and our fellow human beings; actually they are one and the same. So, however we may imagine continual renewal in our movement, perhaps it will be helpful to realize that all change must finally be anchored in this principle.

## Changes to the Language of our Rituals

Rev. James Hindes

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One hundred years ago our church was founded in Switzerland by 45 young people (average age 28!). A powerful devotion to Jesus Christ and the desire to renew the Christian Church inspired them. The texts of the sacraments and rituals came from Rudolf Steiner who had "... received them directly out of the spiritual world."<sup>1</sup> As a modern seer he was able to look deeply into that world and receive the inspirations which God chose to send him. Of course, he wrote down what he had received in German. That was the first translation of the rituals: from worlds of spirit down into an earthly language. Since then, the German text has served as a foundation for translations into more than 20 other languages, reflecting the spread of our movement around the globe. Of course, true sacraments and rituals ultimately originate in a single spiritual being, Christ Jesus, himself. Just as he permeates the entire earth, his sacraments can bless human beings anywhere, in any language.

In 1928 The Christian Community expanded into the English-speaking world. The first translation was, quite naturally, strongly influenced by 19th century Victorian English. In the course of the 20th century that had to change. Faster or slower, languages do evolve over time. This change may be primarily geographical, limited to specific social classes or cultural sectors. Confusion and uncertainty can result from language which at one time in the past might have been unambiguous. So too, actual usage may shift when the mood or 'soul body' of a word evolves with an unchanged conceptual definition. Over the past 100 years some changes made to ritual wording have been minor, others more dramatic, as when the words "thou" and "thee" were replaced by their modern equivalent "you."

Once again the synod of priests working in North America has felt it necessary to change certain words and phrases. A special Translations Committee was created to evaluate the existing texts of our sacraments and rituals. For over six years the members of this committee poured over the texts, weighing and considering every available perspective, sometimes disagreeing, often praying. Finally, last February, the suggestions they submitted were accepted by the North American synod as a whole. They will be heard on the first Advent Sunday of this year (November 27th, 2022).

Perhaps the most noticeable change will be heard when the name of our Eucharist Service, also known as The Lord's Supper or the Mass, is spoken. "Let us worthily fulfill *the Consecration of the Human Being*." Local programs of events will reflect this change soon thereafter. These revisions are intended to make the language of our rituals more transparent for their spiritual content, which is Christ Jesus as he reveals himself today.

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<sup>1</sup> Rudolf Steiner's words spoken Sept. 8, 1922, from Collected Works number 344.

## What is Real?

Rev. Lisa Hildreth

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I put on my headset, connect into the computer interface and I am instantly transported (virtually) to the conference room. There I meet others whom I recognize by their face on their avatar. I can move around in this space, greet different people, make eye contact, have side conversations, step up to the virtual white board and write, even manifest the item about which I am speaking and share it with others. Welcome to the metaverse, a three-dimensional, virtual reality world where one can attend meetings, play games, go to 'live' concerts, create a virtual home, etc. Some of the biggest technology companies in the world are investing billions into this platform so that we can live, work and play in alternate realities.

Some of us are still coming to terms with the regular use of platforms like Zoom, where we are limited to what can be projected in two dimensions on our screen. But this is nothing compared to what is coming. We've entered a time where what seemed fantastic, the domain of science fiction, is rapidly becoming possible. But is it real?

In a time when food is genetically modified, when you can 'grow' slabs of meat from a small number of cells, when Artificial Intelligence (AI) is predicted to surpass human intelligence, and you can spend time in virtual reality, the question of 'What is real?' is becoming increasingly central to our existence.

Consider the generation of meat from cells. The meat is produced from a natural source, from real animal cells. Yet much is different. This slab of flesh was never part of a living, breathing animal that stood grazing on the earth, living under the forces of the sun, moon and stars. How will the human body react to consuming this type of meat? How is it different on a spiritual level? Is it real meat?

Cell generation can be used for many more applications than just meat production. There was a recent announcement that doctors were able to successfully transplant an ear of human cells which was created on a 3-D printer. Other articles spoke of human skin being generated for artificial limbs. These applications can help those who are missing part of their body. If the missing lab-generated part is co-opted by the human body on a physical as well as spiritual level, do they become real? How would this be different if the artificially-created human skin is only used to make robots appear more lifelike?

Questions about reality are not new. Humanity has been pondering this for millennia and has developed differing thoughts throughout the years. A quick look in a dictionary will show that the word 'real' is defined as authentic, genuine, actual — rather than imaginary or fictional. Expanding this definition, one could define 'reality' as the quality or state of being actual or true; that which exists objectively and can be commonly observed and experienced by the senses.

But reality is also subjective. My reality — all that I have observed, experienced, learned — can be distinctly different from another's reality. Consider how differently two witnesses will describe the same event. Neither is likely to be able to offer what actually happened.

What about things that are intangibles, and yet real? Is God real, or could he/she/it just be a phenomena of mass hysteria? If we, as a culture, decide something is real, or imaginary, does that mean that our group decision is true? One can also see that each generation's experience of what is real can be different from the one that came before it.

As we approach and enter the second century of the existence of The Christian Community, one could ask, how do sacraments such as the Act of Consecration of Man fit into this new world? Christian sacraments have been in existence for two thousand years, other rituals for far longer. Many have argued that they belong to humanity's past. They do not experience religious ritual as either real or future oriented.

Yet Rudolf Steiner told the newly formed priest circle something quite striking about the new set of sacraments gifted to our movement for religious renewal. He said that "the ritual, rightly practiced, *is actually more real than nature*." Steiner went on to say, "...if this is understood not as mere theory, but in its full weight, it means something of tremendous consequence. It deepens the saying, 'Heaven and earth will pass away but my words will not pass away'."

For the human being, the natural world is one of the most real things that we experience. It is the ground on which we stand, both literally and figuratively. For those who are also spiritually inclined, the natural world and the spiritual world stand together as the two realms of our existence.

The sacraments offer one of the ways in which human beings can experience this other world — the world of the spirit. People who are given the grace to attend the Act of Consecration of Man with more open eyes describe how they feel on the deepest level — perhaps long before they can put it into words — how this sacrament not only brings them to the threshold of the spiritual world but also allows them to cross over into another more permanent realm. Gradually they realize that the wall behind the altar is the illusory part of reality; it is only the thin veil that separates one from the heights, widths and depths of the spiritual realm.

This reality experienced at the altar not only breaks through the confines of space, but also of time. Through the sacramental act, one enters the world of the eternal. One realizes that all the physical things of this earth, no matter how solid they seem, belong to time and will one day be no more. Even the stars, moon and sun of the heavens will one day pass away, yet the creative Word (Logos) that lives and weaves in the sacrament endures. It is more real than real.

Perhaps this realization should come as no surprise to us, for the human being is no stranger to the eternal. We are drawn to the sacraments because we have a shared experience of ritual in our pre-birth existence. In the present, we have the opportunity to gather again and again in a regular rhythm to witness these services. In the future we will take these Christ-imbued experiences with us through the gate of death and eventually into our next incarnation where they can work on into our thinking, feeling and deeds.

These experiences act as a catalyst for transformation. All who participate in the sacraments, who stand witness to the transubstantiation of the bread and wine into the body and blood of Christ, are working towards a new world. Through the Act of Consecration of Man, we see and know that the things of this material world can be lifted once more to the realm of the spirit, and through the mediation of the Trinity, even become Christ imbued. They can become the seeds of the future.

Through the sacraments, building blocks are created for the future substance of this earth — that which is worthy of belonging to the New Jerusalem. And what could be more vital or real than working towards the creation of a new heaven and earth, with a holy city where all can dwell, united with Christ?



## Legacy Giving: An Interview with Barbara Patterson

Faith DiVecchio, Legacy Giving Coordinator

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*Davina Muse, one of our local legacy coordinators (we are striving to have a coordinator working with planned giving within each congregation in our region), interviewed Barbara Patterson, the wife of the late Rev. Robert Patterson. It is an inspiration to hear Barbara's thoughts about The Christian Community and her life as the wife of a priest.*

When asked how it has felt to be supported by legacy giving in our region, which primarily goes towards the support of retired priests and their families, Barbara answered:

"My experience has been that there is always enough. It is all about trust in the work, trust in the funds, trust in the movement. Sometimes I would go to the grocery store with hardly any money, and I would pick out just what I needed, and I'd have enough, to the exact penny. There was always enough. This develops a trust in the spiritual world. And I over and over again needed this trust to move my family many times to new sendings. Somehow, it was always just right. It hasn't been an easy life, but it has been one that was full of riches."

Barbara feels strongly that along with the support of the retirement of priests, financial support should go to the seminary and its students, and towards the education of the priests' children, so that they can experience a Waldorf Education.

"The goal of all of it," shared Barbara, "Is that the sacraments continue to be celebrated, that they can be celebrated. I feel on ongoing gratitude and thankfulness for the support of the deeper aspects of Robert's work as a priest."

What deeper aspects are we supporting with our legacy gifts, which can often offer support over longer stretches and have the opportunity to 'go deep'?

To read more about the Pattersons, watch for the soon to be published *The Life of Barbara Patterson*, and the previously published *The Life of Robert Patterson*. Both books are written by Barbara and should be available through your local congregations.

*For support with making a legacy gift to your congregation or to the fund for retired priests, please contact the Legacy Giving Coordinator, Faith DiVecchio, at [giving@thechristiancommunity.org](mailto:giving@thechristiancommunity.org)*



## Reflections Upon the Logos Conference in Dortmund, Germany

Sergio Rico, member of The Christian Community in Hillsdale, NY

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In the days following the Logos Conference, held over an extended October weekend in Dortmund Germany, our impressions are anything but static. This event was giant in both scale and personal discovery as our group experienced the panoply of offerings brought from communities all across the world to be shared in the context of *Logos – Consecrating Humanity*.

From the very start of the conference we knew we were in for something unique as the Dortmund Rudolf Steiner School was completely taken over by a rich diversity of languages, priests from almost every imaginable country, and a large group of young people – all of us ready and excited to share reflections of our individual experience in The Christian Community and, moreover, to consider the collective future. Weaving between us was a very unique point of departure: our placement in history as we mark the 100th year anniversary of the founding of The Christian Community. This historic moment felt like the call to action for those of us who have held the community dear and who are prepared to take on an active relationship to it as we began to explore the impulses and qualities which brought us together.

In our group of ten (two priests included, Rev. Liza Marcato and Rev. Ann Burfeind) there was naturally, a range of reasons for our coming to Germany and, in turn, a multiplicity in our impressions of the conference. Some of us held questions of what The Christian Community meant after years of upbringing within it, others were inquiring about the future and ways which we could take part in it, and others yet were on a discovery mission to uncover that special something that drew us in from such different walks of life. Yet, what was common among us was the deep thankfulness we shared for the ability to go towards this, the most poignant experience of community life that perhaps we will ever have. For some of us, this conference gave us an occasion to meet new people face to face from all corners of the world, offering the opportunity to finally break through some of the feelings that have built up over the recent past. Anders (28) puts it this way: *“Especially with how the world has been in the last several years it was a really positive experience to break down those social calluses. What a more perfect place to do that than where people are trying to get to the grit of what it means to be a human being and how to be in community with other people.”*

In earnest, *Logos* came at the perfect time as a compliment to the hard work we’ve had to put in to keep a pulse going in a community that thrives when individuals come together to create a holy space between them. This was a tremendous gift for those of us who strove to keep that



pulse alive and who suffered the blows of isolation that we endured over the past two years. In Dortmund, we came back in full stride with 2,300 of us prepared to make connections, invite each other into our thinking, and to hold fervently to an impulse that we all believe the future needs. The sheer amount of like-minded people sharing similar thoughts about living a Christian path in a modern context was an experience that for some of us had a deep impact, allowing us to feel united in our religious movement. Elizabeth (40): *“Being close to the roots of the movement, and in the birthplace of the movement, I get a sense of the*

*dedication of the thousands of people to this movement. That was powerful. It gave me a sense of place within it and also a feeling of freedom to move within it."*

The sense of devotion to The Christian Community was eye opening as some of us had never seen Anthroposophy at play outside of our localities. Sergio (30) had this to say: *"This trip gave me one the most intimate perspectives into the breadth of the community which formerly I was only familiar with from my personal congregation in Hillsdale, NY, and in NYC. At this point, I now realize what I am a part of and I feel like I am on a great fruit tree with so many other friends. Now I feel I am in a robust and expansive landscape of kindred spirits. I know that this is where I belong."*

For some of us the conference instilled a new vision of the community, one which held out a friendly hand from one generation to the next, Isabel (21): *"For my whole life The Christian Community has been such a great source of comfort and hope. At this anniversary, meeting so many youth like myself, I could feel the greater community supporting us all,"* adding that the encounters she had with the older generation were a source of great joy because, *"I was seeing faces of the ones who made it possible for my generation to experience The Christian Community and all its gifts."* Each of us will go home with these gifts and in turn bring this new perspective back with us accompanied by the feeling that among the thousands of participants, we were the lucky few who were able to make the trip not solely on our own behalf but as representatives of our own congregations. Each and every one of us carried within our hearts friends, family, and so many other important relationships that will benefit in one way or another from our having undertaken this journey. We were all shaped by having done this, taking an extraordinary amount of not only physical but also mental endurance. Yasmine (46) expresses it like this: *"There was a tension I experienced between the serious stuff (the world is in trouble, the community has a mission, the impulse needs carrying) and then there was the other part, the joyfulness, the building of the future!"* adding that these conversations were evidence of a community that was present in their thinking and courageous in their willing, *"I don't know what the next 100 years will look like, but I trust we are going along steadily. That is my main say. I want to walk alongside this stream."*

Through this conference we were given the picture of our unique placement in the great mosaic of people that make up The Christian Community. Vast and substantial as it is we found ourselves located at last in those all-important lines of the Creed read in the Act of Consecration: *"United in a church to which all belong."*

Without a doubt our hats go off to the priests (our own especially, but also those who attended the conference with their members) who held us together with a perfect balance of profound thinking and engaging feeling while also providing a space for fun exploration and joyous inter-connection. This began with our first few days in Berlin and the community meals we made together while singing and playing games, to touring around the capitol city while reflecting on the healing Berlin has had to do these past 70 years, to keeping track of each of us and our well-being at the conference itself in the mammoth challenge of finding the eight of us in a crowd of literally thousands. These two priests deserve gold stars for their achievement in the success of creating





a space where we all felt held, nourished, and supported to draw out our truest selves. Lukas (26) speaks on behalf of the whole group, saying: *"I am very grateful to Liza Marcato and Ann Burfeind for providing us with this experience and for holding a space within the conference where I felt recognized and heard."*

In individual ways we felt compelled to bring our North American perspective to the conversations happening around the conference, adding in a flavor quite different from our European counterparts. From our approach of personal development in a country that encourages us to follow our dreams, to the variety of professional goals we hold, even to our devotional nuances in religious and spiritual life, we were different. In this way it was important for us to be there and many a comment was received as thanks for having made it all the way.

It would be a never-ending task to go back and track each of our impressions of *Logos*, especially as they will continue to grow within us long after we have returned and settled back into our local environments. This trip, for all of us, was indeed a once in a lifetime opportunity and we all gained something new and powerful that will carry our placement in The Christian Community for all cycles of time to come. In our hearts we bring back a new seed within us; it is a seed that plants a vision of hope and the clarity of our connection to the community. Our new understanding of who we are in communion with from all across the globe is undoubtedly the strength of what Rev. Patrick Kennedy called, in closing words of the conference, the 8th Sacrament: Being Together. From South Africa to Australia, from Netherlands to the UK, from Spain to Argentina, Finland, Ukraine, Russia, Germany, and the United States (to name only a few) we are all in this together. Through the conference we witnessed bonds that have taken a hundred years to build solidifying into a foundation strong enough to hold all that is to become in the next century. Each of us is tremendously and eternally thankful to have received the generous support and encouragement to leave our comfort zones and experience the grand tapestry that we are a part of. This will, with fullest certainty, live on within us — the fruits of which are only beginning to blossom.

*October 13, 2022*

Sergio Rico, on behalf of the group of travelers: Lukas Chin, Grace Abler, Lindsay Garcia, Anders Pitman, Isabel Dancey, Yasmine Kabsy and Elizabeth Marshall

*We wish to formally thank the Pamphalon Foundation in Florida which provided us with financial support to make the trip. For many of us this kind of a venture would have been an impossible dream. Thanks to their generosity, each and every one of us has something new burning within our hearts that we are able to share on a large scale as we move forward together with The Christian Community — united, aligned, and forever growing our commitment.*



## A Report from Adventure Camps 2022

An Initiative of The Christian Community

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Beginning in September, 2021, the staff for the summer camps of 2022 were meeting regularly:

- Online calls were held with six to eight young adults who planned and then mostly staffed the camps.
- Coordinators for the following areas of responsibility were filled: Physical (food, gear, administration), Spiritual (priests), and Cultural (stories, singing, games).
- New locations, routes and dates were scouted and chosen.
- An overarching theme was found to connect the spiritual life of each camp to the Spirit of Adventure Camps.
- A website was launched that included all registration, payment requirements and our history.
- A new administrative standard was introduced and upheld.

Each camp that was planned was fulfilled, with adjustments. This year a priest helped to plan, review and attend each of the camps. Last year a priest attended two of the five camps. The Midwest children's camp returned this year. An altar was able to be established with the Act of Consecration celebrated, the Close of Day, as well as the Sunday Service for Children. The young adult's conference in Chicago also brought the sacramental into the life of camp. This was not possible last year. We trained a new generation of counselors in the Midwest. Next year the Southeast camp is ready to also have an altar and a sacramental life.

- 39 children and teens participated in camps in the Summer of 2022
- 21 were first-time participants (from 16 new families)

We are grateful for all the hard work and trust that we all poured into the joy of coming together around stories, songs, blue skies and storm clouds, wind and rain, laughter, and tears. For all of this, and for the light of selfless love that made camp possible, we can be grateful.

Together we created six camps:

### **Backpacking Staff Camp**

**Harriman State Park, NY**

**June 13-18, 2022**

**Theme: Seek and Arrive**

This camp was intended and planned as a children's backpacking camp. There was no registration, so it became a staff and other young adults camp. Seven people hiked for five days. The review of this camp showed that unless we provide all the gear for children, we will likely not have enough enrollment, due to growing children not always owning the necessary gear. Starting the full camp season with a staff camp was helpful to try out gear, live into the rhythm of the day and build shared interest and trust.



## **High School Backpacking (Forest Camp)**

**Catskills Mountains, NY**

**June 23-30, 2022**

**Theme: Echoes and Shadows**

7 nights, 25 miles

Four teens attended, from Chicago, New Jersey, and Pennsylvania.

Staff: Jen Zimberg, Clara Zinky, Carley Horan, Amrita Shore, and Robert Bower attended as the priest.



## **Kite Camp for Children (Ocean Camp)**

**Cape Henlopen State Park, Delaware**

**July 6-13, 2022**

**Theme: Sun, Sand and Tides**

This was the second year of camp in the Southeast. We are discovering what it means to hold a sacred space outdoors and are ready for an altar and services next summer.

Nine children and six adults attended. Kasper Marona,

Jen Zimberg, Carley Horan, Clara Zinky, Gillian Cross (seminary intern), and Matthias Giles as the priest. Children came from Spring Valley, Birmingham, and the DC area.

## **Young Adult Conference in Chicago**

**July 15-17, 2022**

**Theme: Why Adventure, Why Be Bold?**

For the camp staff, this was a middle point of reflection on the summer as well as a chance to meet in conversation and around the altar. We celebrated the sacrament and sang for a baptism of the child of a young parent from the peer group. This was also Chicago's farewell to Victoria Capon. It was useful to debrief in the middle of the camp season as well as to gather in contemplation and carry new thoughts into the camps ahead.

Priests present: Jeana Lee, Victoria Capon, Robert Bower, Craig Wiggins and Ann Burfeind

## **High School Canoe Camp (River Camp)**

**Namekagon River, WI**

**July 22-August 1, 2022**

**Theme: Ripples**

78 miles

This was the seventh year of the canoe camp. The former participants are now leaders and organizers. The camp was led by Kasper Marona, Carley Horan, Jen Zimberg, Clara Zinky, Jakob Halbauer, Seminary Intern Gillan Cross, and Jeana Lee was the priest. We welcomed many new families this year, all of whom have expressed immense gratitude and excitement for next year.



## **Camp Greenwood Lake For Children Dodgeville, WI**

**August 4-11, 2022**

**Theme: Homes, Hives and Hollows**

21 souls



9 children  
5 teens as counselors  
7 adults

The priests, seminary interns, and teens met for three days before camp to prepare for the arrival of the children. Part of the preparation for the first-time counselors was to write their own morning and evening verses and memorize them. We practiced mealtime, bedtime and morning rhythms. We cared for ourselves and each other outside for a week. The children were in two groups of older and younger. They were carefully and joyfully looked after by their counselors. We played, joked, sewed pillows, swam, and made new friends.

The adults were Milo Zinky, Carley Horan, Kasper Marona, and Jen Zimberg. Seminary Intern Claire Jerram and priests Emma Heirman and Ann Burfeind. The stories, songs, games, and even Adventure Course added to the traditional and beloved form of camp. The groups were called into meals and assemblies by their self-chosen names. The children worked alongside their counselors to clean up and care for camp. The campers came from Boulder, Minnesota, Wisconsin and Chicago.

# The CRUX of the Matter

THE HEART, OUR SELVES, AND COMMUNITY

A CONFERENCE FOR YOUNG ADULTS AGE 18-35

NEW YEAR'S WEEKEND:  
DECEMBER 28, 2022 - JANUARY 1, 2023  
10 GREEN RIVER LANE, HILLSDALE, NY 12529

What would you do if you knew you could not fail?

Who are you becoming?

How can we, as a community, support each other in our tasks?

FINDING OUR OWN PATH AS YOUNG PEOPLE TODAY CAN BE AN EXTREMELY DIFFICULT TASK. WE LIVE IN A WORLD OF SPEED, CHAOS, AND POLARITY - AND WITH EACH PASSING YEAR, THIS REALITY SEEMS TO BE INCREASINGLY TRUE IN NEARLY EVERY AREA OF LIFE. HOW ARE WE TO "FIND OURSELVES," "STAY CENTERED," AND "DO GOOD IN THE WORLD" AMIDST SUCH A CHALLENGING AND TUMULTUOUS ENVIRONMENT?

WE WILL SPEND THE POWERFUL MARKER OF NEW YEAR'S TOGETHER THIS YEAR HOLDING THESE QUESTIONS WITH THE STRENGTH THAT LOVING COMMUNITY CAN LEND TO AN INDIVIDUAL. WE AIM TO CREATE A SOBER SPACE THAT CAN HOLD CREATIVITY, CONTEMPLATION, REFLECTION, JOY, AND MORE.

THE CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY  
MOVEMENT FOR RELIGIOUS RENEWAL

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## Glory, Eternity and Change

Philip Mees, Member of The Christian Community in Los Angeles, CA

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*Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit,  
As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end.*

The “Glory Be to the Father” prayer is a profound devotional expression of worship of the Trinity, the highest beings in the spiritual world, and of a conviction, or a hope perhaps that, whereas everything on earth constantly changes, what lives at the center of our universe will always be there with its glory and power to guide us all.

But what do the word glory and the related verb, to glorify, actually mean? Clearly, what is meant in the above passage is something immensely great and lofty, far above ordinary humanity. When we consult Webster’s dictionary we find things like fame, adoration, and splendor, but also pleasure and boast. And when we use the verb glorify in common parlance we usually mean making something or someone seem greater, better, more beautiful than they are – almost like a forced, artificial kind of adoration, a far cry from true worship.

The word glory occurs frequently in the King James translation, and its later modernizations, of the Gospel of St. John. It is a translation of the ancient Greek word *doxa* which, in turn, was a translation of an ancient Hebrew word that meant: *revelation* in its most profound form. We should think of revelation of the essential inner being after shedding all the layers of outer appearance – revelation of the deepest truth, therefore, living in a being. Thus it is not something we bestow on the divinity in our worship; it is rather an expression of our recognition of its deepest, essential being.

An example to illustrate this: in verse 1 of chapter 17 of the John Gospel, the Revised Standard Version describes Christ as asking the Father: “Father, the hour has come; glorify thy Son that the Son may glorify thee.” Would Christ really have asked the Father to glorify Him in the sense in which we use the verb today? That is simply not a credible interpretation. Now, when we look in Jon Madsen’s rendering of the New Testament – which is based on Rudolf Steiner’s indications – we read: “Father, the hour has come, reveal the being of your Son, so that your Son may reveal your being.” At once the passage has the most profound meaning, especially when we consider that it was said not long before Christ was arrested and he was speaking in the most intimate way to His disciples. There are many other passages in the John Gospel in which the word glory becomes similarly more meaningful in the Madsen rendering.

Let us now consider the second part of the prayer – *As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end.* This is a picture of permanence, of total dependability in sharp contrast with the ever-changing situation on earth, which often causes humanity much fear and suffering. We crave this as the only firm ground we have that we can stand on in our earthly consciousness.

However, as Rudolf Steiner indicates, the reality is different. In the many pictures of evolution he gave us he often shows that movement existed before rest. Moreover, in verse 1 of Genesis we are told that in the beginning “the earth was without form and void” and “the Spirit of God was moving over the face of the waters.” Clearly a picture of activity and movement. Not until the third day do we hear of dry land. And so one creative deed after another is described. Only on the seventh day, after God had looked at his work and had seen that “behold, it was very good,” did He rest. Movement, then rest.

We also see a remarkable example in the development of the human embryo. There is a stage when there is blood circulation but not yet a heart. In our heart the blood circulation comes to rest for a fraction of a second. The heart does not cause the blood to circulate; it momentarily stops the circulation and then regulates it in accordance with the needs of the body.

The epistle that is read in the Act of Consecration of Man during Advent speaks of “God’s becoming.” That seems to be completely at odds with “as it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be.” What can this mean? Does God become, grow, evolve? It is a startling thought. But actually, when we follow Rudolf Steiner’s teaching, we are led to the conclusion that all movement, growth, evolution on earth reflects in some way or other what happens in the spiritual world. The forces of the cosmos work in each one of us. How could we grow and evolve if the cosmos were static? Something static could not stimulate growth in something else; it would not know what growth is. So the conclusion would need to be that the cosmos is also in a condition of continuous development, and that the development of spiritual beings reflects what is happening in beings above them. And for this to be possible, the center of the universe that guides everything, the Trinity, also has to be in continuous development! Ceaseless change.

Finally, in the Act of Consecration of Man there is a phrase that occurs several times and in a few variations, such as, “through all cycles of time,” or “through all ages of the earth to come.” This might seem to be just another way of saying what the second line from the “Glory Be to the Father” prayer says. However, there is a big difference. The expressions used in the Act of Consecration invariably come after the description of an activity, of movement. They occur, for instance, after the prayer that our thoughts may “live in the life of the Holy Spirit,” and after the statement that Christ “bears and orders the life of the world.” The implication is that change and movement are assumed; they are not the exception from which we have to be protected. And this constant change and movement is guided by the Christ, who is always creating – creating Himself, creating the cosmos, creating the earth, so that human beings may reflect His activity in their own souls’ creating.

Glory, Eternity, and Change – Revelation, Eternal Creation, and Ceaseless Evolution.

## Supporting You — Resources from our Regional Website

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Our North American Christian Community website now has several opportunities to inspire you on your path. You can sign up for any or all:

- **Blog** - thoughtful contributions on various themes by various authors. The blog includes a new Biographies Series, which comes to us from The North American Seminary. It features translations of notable biographies of the founders of The Christian Community.
- **Homilies** - weekly contemplations of the gospel reading for the week (audio and written) by Rev. C. Hindes.
- **Invisible Kingdom** - weekly **stories** (audio and written) for adults and children by various authors.
- **Prayer Warriors** - join us praying the Lord's Prayer daily for peace, with a monthly contemplation.
- **Newsletter** - twice yearly news about happenings in the North American region.

To update your preferences, click [Update Your Preferences](#) at the bottom of any of our emails. (If you click unsubscribe, you will remove yourself from *all* future emails from us.)

In addition, you are encouraged to visit the various pages on our website for more resources.

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


[Search for congregations and affiliates here](#) under *Congregations* Tab

Resources for children [here](#) and [here](#) under *Children and Youth* Tab

[Festivals, Further Reading, Biographies, and more resources](#) under *Resources* Tab

[Events Around the Region](#) (*Events* Tab)

[Seminary](#) (*Seminary* Tab)



**THE CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY**  
MOVEMENT FOR RELIGIOUS RENEWAL

Are you part of an affiliate congregation? - You are not alone!

Save the date for this special conference

**What:** Announcing a first time conference for affiliate organizers of The Christian Community from across North America. Come join others in Tucson to get to know one another and share in community.

**Where and When:** Tucson, Arizona. (zip code: 85719) February 16, 5:00 PM – 19, 1:00 PM, 2023

**Who:** Present will be: Reverends Craig Wiggins, Ann Burfeind, Lisa Majoros, and Liza Marcato among others.

**Participation Cost:** From \$150-\$400 depending on what you are able to contribute\*

\*Participation cost includes Thursday dinner, Friday lunch + dinner, Saturday lunch + dinner, Sunday potluck lunch, coffee and light refreshments. It does not include breakfasts, housing, and travel.

Together we Will Share

Worship  
Deepen our relationship with the Consecration of the Human Being (The Act of Consecration of Man) through daily worship and shared learning with each other and priests.

Fellowship  
Get to know each other and our shared goals, victories, struggles, and fears.

Organizing Skills  
Practice together the skills and capacities of organizing affiliate communities. What has worked and what has not?

For more information, click [here](#) or visit [www.AdventureCampsCC.org/Tucson-Conference](http://www.AdventureCampsCC.org/Tucson-Conference)

You are not alone

Behold, the hour is coming, indeed it has come, when you will be scattered, each to his own home, and will leave me alone. Yet I am not alone, for the Father is with me. I have said these things to you, that in me you may have peace. In the world, you will have tribulation. But take heart; I have overcome the world." John 16:32-33