

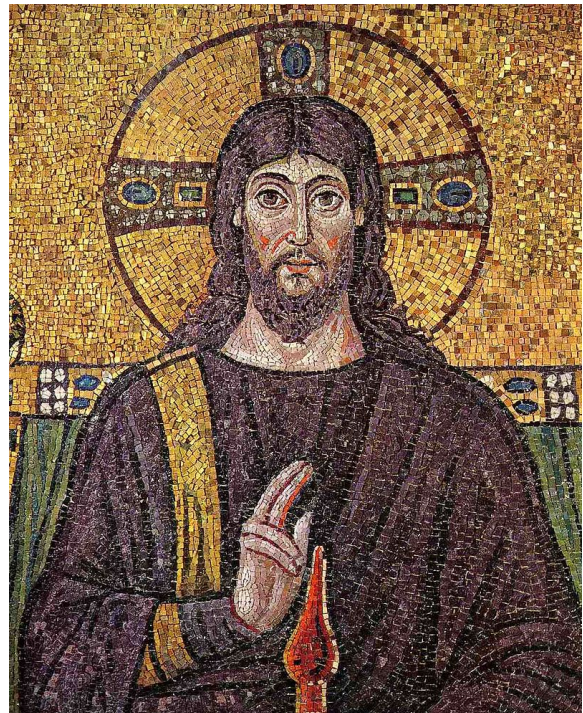
North American Newsletter

Autumn, 2024

A Letter from Our Lenker — Rev. Jonah Evans

Dear Community of Christians in North America,

It is very important for the vitality of our movement for religious renewal that we from time to time remind ourselves of our task, our mission. Indeed, our movement has a mission! And our mission is connected with the next steps of Christian evolution. This task that we are called to be part of in our time, as we learn to pray and devote ourselves to Christ at His altar — this task is one of healing. The movement for religious renewal has been inspired on earth to move the Community of Christians forward in a healing way. This healing is connected to two fundamental realities of our human experience: the experience of being a self and the experience of *missing the mark* of our best intentions (sin).



Firstly, we can remind ourselves of the task of healing the self. Perhaps the most unique quality of our service, and one that is well known to all of you, is that eight times during our Consecration of the Human Being, the priest turns to the congregation and proclaims, “Christ in you.”

And this proclamation, this experience of the priest turning and proclaiming this most central mystery, “Christ in You” is not meant to merely remind us that Christ lives in us like a seed, waiting to sprout. This experience is also to awaken us to the reality that Christ Jesus Himself, standing before us at the altar, is shining through and speaking through the ordained priest. Christ Jesus is literally radiating His being from the heart of the ordained priest into our hearts. We are encountering Christ Jesus through the priest and we are called to receive this substance and blessing each time the priest turns in this way, if only we have the eyes to see and the ears to hear!

Mosaic of Christ, Ravenna, Italy

Our central Sacrament calls us to feel this relationship, this outpouring substance from the altar into our hearts. In this sense, the proclamation “Christ in you” also means sensing Christ in an encounter, as the true and beloved *thou* – one in whose relationship our true selves are found. As Paul says in his letter to the Colossians, “You have died, and your true self lives in Christ Jesus. And when He appears, when we encounter Him, He will reveal our true selves through Him.” (Col. 3:3) Or, as Rudolf Steiner says, “When we encounter Christ Jesus, He gives our humanity to us.”

In this light, the self that we carry, the self that we experience every day as our consciousness – the one in us that can say yes and no, experiencing itself as an independent self – is waiting to be made whole. Our self is not yet a full self, it needs healing through the encounter and experience of a relationship with Christ Jesus. This is why we practice and devote ourselves to this experience at the altar, again and again, coming to the Consecration of the Human Being. We dedicate ourselves to this encounter, especially at communion, when the priest, embodying the actual presence of Christ Jesus, comes and stands before each of us, face-to-face, pouring the substance of His peace upon us and into us. Here, we are meant to feel and be called to feel that our self becomes whole as He bestows it into us.

In this light, it is very important how we approach the altar. It is vitally important that we orient our hearts to the expectation that the real Christ Jesus will appear in and through the priest, that when we come to communion, Christ Himself will touch our faces. This is meant to make us whole. Moreover, this healing (making whole) of the self is not meant to stop at the altar; the Consecration of the Human Being is also a training ground for us to learn to experience Christ Jesus in our encounter with other human beings in everyday life.

The priest is then an entity, a window, a doorway through whom we encounter the living Christ. And in the final pictures of the Bible, we are all called to become living priests.

It was such a blessing for me to experience the inauguration of Rev. Julia Polter in Seattle, WA and to witness the group there recognizing that they had now become a real congregation with their own priest. Before I went out to make this announcement to the approximately 25 souls gathered in the chapel, I told Christina Sophia, who has been carrying the impulse of this affiliate congregation for decades. She was so taken aback, not realizing that I would make this announcement, that she started to weep right there in the vestry. She spoke words like, “Oh, I am so overwhelmed with gratitude. I am so grateful to God.”

It was so powerful for me to experience this gratitude coming through her. What I experienced was not just the substance of her endurance, devotion, and gratitude to this congregation, but Christ’s endurance, devotion, and gratitude also pouring through her words and heart. In that moment, Christina Sophia became priestly, a priest for me, as I felt His gratitude and long-suffering pouring out through her into my heart. In that moment, I felt more myself, my true self, than I had been before. When I then went out to speak to the congregation, the substance that I received became words and blessings for them. I was able to speak because I had received my true self through Christ, through Christina Sophia.

We could call this type of experience *sacramentalism*. It’s when, through everyday human encounters, we are also able to experience Christ through other human beings, touching us and bringing us more to ourselves. If we deepen ourselves in the sacrament at the altar, where through the ordained priest we learn to feel healed in ourselves, we will more and more develop the capacity to experience and recognize this in our everyday lives. The self becomes whole and made whole by experiencing Christ’s power, substance, and reality through others. In this way, we connect to the healing mission of our movement.

Another very important task for our movement is cultivating a new relationship with sin. In other forms of Christian practice, and sometimes even within our own movement, we often encounter a tendency to relate to sin with a condemning spirit. This spirit tells us that when we see sin, we judge it and condemn it. We believe that if I am a sinner, I am far from God. And if sin is present, it must be cast out before I can get close to what is Holy. These thoughts, however, are tied to old mysteries before the Incarnation of Christ and the Mystery of Golgotha.

In the old Jewish mysteries, one had to place all sin onto a goat and cast the animal out of the city. One had to be completely clean from all sin before approaching God and entering the Holy of Holies in the temple. But with the incarnation, death, and resurrection of Christ, something radical has changed.

Our mission is to start to gradually understand a new relationship with sin. In our sacrament, in our Consecration of the Human Being, we do not cast off sin as was done before entering the Holy of Holies. Instead, we bring our sin to the very altar itself. We recognize that we are full of sin, and we acknowledge that our sin is constantly flowing to God. Our sin becomes deeply useful because it inspires us to offer the very best of ourselves to God, opening our hearts to His grace. This offering of ourselves, inspired by our brokenness, our daily strays from God, our denials of God, and our weaknesses, becomes the vessel for receiving the gift of God's being through the body and blood of Christ. Indeed, a right relationship with our sin prepares us to receive grace.

Healing our relationship to sin means that sin is called to become the most useful thing we have, helping us to mature and grow as human beings, to understand what we carry, and to open us to receive divine grace as a gift of God.

As a region, we are in a time of hope and change. Paradoxically, it is also a time of pain and grief. Many of you know that we recently experienced the shock of one of our priests, Ann Burfeind, leaving the circle. Through her own path, she decided that the priesthood in The Christian Community was no longer something she could unite herself with. This indeed was very painful for many of us, and it is rightful for us to go through a process of grief, not just in relation to Ann as a person but also in relation to what she carried as an impulse. She was so inspired to move us forward, and I carry this hope that we take our new steps rightfully toward our true task in the world as the movement for religious renewal.

We also experienced the deaths of two of our senior, long-carrying priests: Rev. Erk Ludwig and Rev. Jim Hindes. Erk blessed us with his clear lectures and insights. His love for the youth and seminary has been so important to so many of us. I will always remember him telling me that the most important thing to learn in the seminary is to inspire the students to love the Mystery of Golgotha. Jim Hindes was a pillar of our movement. His love for the priests stands out to me. He would make efforts to call, be present, even fly to visit colleagues on his own initiative. This love also translated into his work with the congregations. So many of us will miss his strong, grounding presence.

At the same time, we are also experiencing an incredible time of grace. I have the strong heart sense that both Jim and Erk are working on the other side to support our new growth in the region. With the blossoming of the Seminary, we are seeing many new students, many human hearts aspiring to become priests, and also venturing out into new places and new cities where we have not yet had congregations.

In this light, we will inaugurate a new congregation in Chapel Hill, NC this November, where Rev. Claire Jerram and Rev. Daniil Kalinov will be sent. Next summer, we will also inaugurate a

new congregation in Atlanta, GA where Revs. Kate and Patrick Kennedy will be sent. Combined with the new congregation in Seattle/Bellingham, we will have three new congregations within the span of a year. This certainly gives me tremendous hope for the future.

However, it also requires tremendous courage. I find myself praying daily for Christ's courage and faith that these new impulses, these new congregations, be carried in Him, and that we find the resources and funds to meet this new challenge. I would ask every one of you, if you feel so inspired, to give whatever resources you can to these new initiatives in Chapel Hill, Atlanta, and Seattle. If you would like to participate in their support, please contact the Lenker through our regional email: CCNAoffice@gmail.com.

There are also many other movements happening in our region. For example, Los Angeles, CA will receive a new priest in the summer of 2025. Rev. Anna Silber and her family will make the trek out to Los Angeles from Spring Valley, NY. After much prayer, meditation, and conversation with the previous priest of Los Angeles, Rafal Nowak, it became clear that Anna's particular gifts would be best suited for the Los Angeles congregation. And through a funeral she conducted there, the congregation was touched and inspired and brought into a new kind of life. Discovering this was the guidance I needed from the Spirit for her new sending.

Denver has also received a new priest. Rev. Rafal Nowak has been sent from Los Angeles to Denver, creating new excitement and hope in the Denver congregation. At his induction service, I experience a congregation inspired by his leadership and ready to grow into the future.

Rev. Michael Latham is creating new life and deepening the connection with the Sacraments in our San Francisco congregation. I was so moved to find a new youth group and dynamic study-groups meeting as well.

I have so much admiration for the Los Angeles congregation. Even while they have no resident priest this year, awaiting Rev. Anna Silber who will be sent in summer of '25, they continue to have an active board and hold regular devotional gatherings between the monthly services held by visiting priests.

The Sacramento congregation is experiencing a time of transition and renewal. With her deep devotion and hard work, Rev. Nora Minassian is shepherding the congregation as they make tremendous efforts to pay off loans for their new church building, securing a strong foundation for many years to come.

After experiencing his induction in Vancouver, Rev. Marc Fortin has been received with tremendous love and hope. He will join Rev. Erica MacLennan with the hopes of bringing Vancouver into a new phase of its development.

Rev. Paul Newton has also been sent to Chicago, where he will join Rev. Jeana Lee. There is a special chemistry between them that I hope will begin to build up and bring new life to the greater Chicago area and the Midwest.

It was a delight to visit the Detroit congregation for the first time. With Rev. Victoria Capon's enthusiasm and devotion, the congregation feels increasingly vital and alive.

Turning our gaze to the East Coast, Rev. Liza Marcato is carrying the congregation in New York City with devotion, making efforts to reach out and renew (they also have what is probably the best congregational website around!).

Rev. Carol Kelly in Hillsdale is feeling overwhelmingly blessed with an abundance of life and new impulses living in the Hillsdale congregation. Joined by Rev. Robert Bower, whose gifts are blossoming, they make a good team. Rev. Bower continues to be a priest in Boston one Sunday a month, where he works with Rev. Lisa Hildreth, who carries the Boston congregation full-time with strength and steadfastness, even though she suffered a setback this year with her broken leg.

Even though one can wonder what will happen with Spring Valley, now that both priests, Paul and Anna, will be sent to different congregations, rest assured, there is a plan! I cannot say who yet, but Spring Valley will receive a new priest. I have much confidence in the future of the Spring Valley congregation.

Bringing our gaze up to Toronto, the Seminary continues to feel vital. We will have the largest student body in our history this year. The Toronto congregation, carried by Rev. Kate Kennedy, is also experiencing new life, particularly in the children's programs and the festivals.

Moving down past Spring Valley into the Washington D.C. area, Revs. Matthias Giles and Emma Herman are shepherding and tending with care the congregation in D.C./Baltimore. They will be sorely missed as they have received a new sending for next summer to come to the Toronto congregation and the Seminary respectively as Patrick and Kate follow their sending to Atlanta.

Revs. Lisa Majoros and Mimi Coleman have both decided, together with the support of the leadership, to take leaves of absence. Rev. Mimi Coleman has taken up chaplaincy training. Rev. Lisa Majoros has moved to Atlanta to care for her ailing mother. Both Mimi and Lisa will remain connected to the altars of Hillsdale and Atlanta respectively, and will be available to help in various ways when the time is right. In the future, we will look again at possible sendings for these two priests.

We must also not forget that the beautiful congregation of Devon near Philadelphia, PA is experiencing a time of fructification and enlivening strength through the shepherding and guidance of Rev. Jong Wong Choi, with limited help from Rev. Hugh Thornton.

Dear friends, please pray for me as your Lenker, as I daily experience the deep need in myself for true strength. I will also pray for all of us to receive even more of Christ's courage, endurance, faith, and love. Let us carry each other in our hearts as we move into a time of new growth, new risks, and new life.

Yours in Christ,

Jonah



Equinox

Rev. Rafal Nowak

Today (*Sunday, September 22, 2024*) is the first day of autumn, the equinox.

From an astronomical point of view, it's the moment when the sun, as seen against the backdrop of the ecliptic, passes through 0 degrees of Libra. In addition to designating one of the two equinoxes of the year, Libra, also known as the Scales, is the threshold that separates the months of summer brightness from the increasing darkness of winter. It is a point of balance and equilibrium between two extremes.

From the point of view of astrology and symbolism, Libra is the only sign that is not of divine, but of human origin. Unlike the animals, beasts, or heroes of the zodiac, Libra – the Scales – is a human invention: an instrument of measurement, a tool of discernment.

Libra is also the “youngest” part of the zodiac; it was recognized and named as an independent constellation only in the times of the Roman Empire. Curiously, even the beauty and harmony-seeking ancient Greeks did not perceive Libra as an independent part of the cosmos. Instead, where we see the point of Balance, they, following even earlier ancient traditions, perceive the chelae, the claws, the extension of the constellation of the Scorpion.

We owe to the ancient Greeks not only our ability to recognize the Scales as an independent part of the universe, but also our ability to introduce the element of balance, of equilibrium, into the world of nature, into our social life, and even into the life of our soul.

The work and striving of the entire civilization, their devotion and search for truth, beauty, and goodness in the world, was forever “rewarded” in the form of a new constellation. Libra is the legacy of the Greek epoch of the world's history.

Here the question can be asked, what about *us*?

Is there something of eternal value that we as a civilization are called to discover? Something that we, as a global community, are destined to leave behind as a collective cultural legacy of our period in world history? *A new sign*, a constellation that will complement the starry sky long after our time has passed? (To be sure, piles of garbage, plastic bottles, car batteries, and spent nuclear fuel we bury in the grave of Mother Earth are but a satanic perversion of this noble ideal.)

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With this Sunday, the day of Autumn equinox, we conclude the ten-week summer period of the Trinity, which spans between the end of the feast of St. John and the beginning of the feast of St. Michael the Archangel.

We began this “epoch” in the liturgy of The Christian Community with the question that Jesus asks his disciples on the way from Caesarea Philippi: “Who do *you* say that I am?” (Mark 8). This is perhaps the most challenging question that humanity as a whole, as well as each one of us, can face in our time.

What follows in the subsequent weeks is related to a process of healing of the human being.

We follow Jesus on his journey through different places, regions, and cities and witness how his teachings find fulfillment in a quintessential “course of miracles.”

A significant number of the Gospel fragments read during the Trinity Summer weeks have to do with Christ’s therapeutic response to the effects of the “sickness of sin within the bodily nature of mankind”: the healing of the blind beggar near Jericho (Luke 18:35 - *sight and seeing*), the healing of the deaf and mute on the way to the Decapolis (Mark 7:31 - *hearing and speech*), and the healing of the ten lepers between Samaria and Galilee (Luke 17:11 - *sense of touch*). In addition, both the sending of the twelve and the sending of the seventy-two include descriptions of Christ’s bestowal of his healing powers on his disciples (Luke 9 and 10).

This journey through time and space finds its fulfillment on the last Sunday before Michaelmas, in the fragment describing “the raising of the young man of Nain” (Luke 7:11).

Here, in a moment of culmination, we experience the grand finale of the workings of the Christ’s “I” in the destiny of the human being. In the scene of the awakening of the “son of the widow” a possibility, a direction is presented to all of modern humanity.

His call directed to the “dead one” doesn’t end with him who was carried out through the gates of Nain on a bier. Perhaps in no other epoch but ours does His call echo with equal force: “Young man (young woman), I say to you, rise!” (And the dead rose and began to speak!)

The completion of the healing process — the reawakening and activation of what is dead, buried, and inactive in us — depends on our answer to the question posted at the beginning of the journey. It is out of our ability to answer Him from the depths of our hearts, our ability to confess to *our* divinity that came into this world along with the Christ, that the healing of our senses, the awakening to a higher purpose, the quickening of our faith can proceed.

Perhaps this is the beginning of the fulfillment of the great task set before our times by the divine powers of Providence: to wake up together with him who was called back to life by the Redeemer — the Son of the Widow. Like him, we must become stewards of the mysteries of healing through compassion — bearers of the Healing Cup of Christ in our times.

*

Those who closely follow the Sun’s journey through the stations of the Zodiac know that a 13th sign can (already?) be seen “cutting” between the end of the constellation Scorpio and Sagittarius. The constellation I am referring to is known as Ophiuchus, the Snake Tamer. The Sun passes through this part of the starry sky between November 29 and December 18.

Is Ophiuchus/Asclepius — the Great Healer — a prophecy of the great task that our civilization is destined to realize on behalf of all humanity in our times?

For Rev. Nowak’s sermons, talks, and other content, please subscribe to:

<http://patreon.com/waytoemmaus>

All proceeds go to support The Christian Community in Colorado.

Our Newest Priests in the North American Region

Revs. Claire Jerram, Daniil Kalinov, and Marc Fortin



Left to right: Claire Jerram, Daniil Kalinov, Gloria Connell Marin (sent to South America), and Marc Fortin in Toronto on their Ordination Weekend, July 6-7, 2024

From Rev. Claire Jerram

I grew up in Louisville, KY, where I sang in a church choir. I studied art in college, and travelled also to China. But at age twenty-three I began a Waldorf teacher training in California, and there discovered my life's teacher in Rudolf Steiner.

I first came into close contact with The Christian Community in marriage preparation meetings with Rev. Peter Skaller. Soon after this, I left my class and went to England to study at Artemis School of Speech and Drama for four years. Over the course of this training, my first husband and I divorced and I met my second husband.

We moved to Philadelphia where I rekindled my connection to The Christian Community, now in the nearby Devon congregation. After this I taught for seven years at the Waldorf School of Baltimore, Maryland, driving every Sunday down to The Christian Community in College Park.

In 2019 I passed my class to another teacher, and prepared to join the seminary. I felt I could no longer bear to be away from the altar, where I had received much help and healing. I wished to help this altar reality become real for others.

During 2020, no one could go to Canada, so some of us seminarians studied in 2021 in a "pop up" seminary in Hillsdale, NY. During the following two years, I entered into two internships, one in Stourbridge, England, and one in my home congregation in Maryland with Revs. Matthias Giles and Emma Heirman. During this time I visited the Chapel Hill affiliate with Rev. Giles and served it as an intern. Then in 2023, I studied at the seminary in Toronto, and was ordained in July, 2024.

I am delighted to help bring to birth the new congregation in Chapel Hill, NC, with this dedicated team and with my ordination brother Rev. Daniil Kalinov. Our founding date will be November 17th. Please stand with us in spirit.

From Rev. Daniil Kalinov — “The Way” of the Service

When you imagine all the ways the Act of Consecration is celebrated all over the world, it can be quite dizzying! How many buildings: from humble re-purposed garages to the great cathedral-like purposed building. How many different languages: from English and Spanish to Japanese and Korean, from Norwegian and Swedish to Afrikaans. And hundred of priests! Each bringing something unique out of their insights and education, also their unique quirks and idiosyncrasies. The possibilities are as wide as the world. And yet, we usually start with one.

When I first met The Christian Community in late Spring of 2018 in Boston, Rev. Lisa Hildreth was the only priest I knew. For a while the way she celebrated the service in English was *the way*, it was *the service*. But quickly my experience began to widen. First with the experience of the service in Russian in Moscow, when I returned to my home city for the summer to see my parents. Also later, as I went for the open course in the Seminary in Spring Valley to see if there might be something there for me. And with this, something started to change. The way Lisa celebrated wasn't *the way* anymore. It was just one beautiful expression of the service. But the service itself — it began becoming something existing on its own, partly independent of its expressions.

During my Seminary time, this experience continued to expand. I spent 3 years in Toronto, Stuttgart and Hannover (for my internship), experiencing the Act of Consecration in around ten languages, celebrated by dozens of priests. With this, another thing became clear. The expressions are also not the same. Some allow more of the service to shine through (at least for me), some less. While I was in Germany, another thing happened — the translation of the service in North America changed. And as I heard about the different experiences people had with it, I also wondered: How much will this change the experience of the service for me?

So, one could say, that through experiencing all these manifold of expressions of the Consecration, I began to also ask myself: What is the *right* expression? What is the *right* translation? What is the *right way* to celebrate? And as I was coming closer to ordination it gradually changed into a more vital question: What is *my way* to celebrate?

Now, ordained, I already had an opportunity to celebrate in three languages: English, Russian and German. The latter mostly due to the fact that the last three months I was serving as a guest in the community in Bremen, waiting for my visa to the US. And I can say that since my ordination, every Consecration that I have celebrated was an attempt to answer this last question: How should I celebrate? And it seems right that this question should accompany me throughout my whole life — that this striving needs to be there for my celebrating to be worthy.

In the last three months, I also took a deep dive into the history of Russian translations of the Sacraments. As I write this, I am on a train back from Berlin, where I had a chance to do some research in the Central Archive of The Christian Community. Today I looked through many different versions of the sacramental words in Russian. I followed the long history of how people tried to reach that *right way* of forming these words so that they can bear the spirit of the service into the hearts of the congregation members. The history, which is still in a process of becoming.

And what have I learned from these three months? Perhaps, surprisingly, that *the way* is not *that* important! Of course, it is key that we strive to create the best translation, to celebrate in a most transparent way. But after all, the Christ *is* there, within the Act of Consecration. He *wants* to show himself to humankind through the service. And now, I am quite certain that we have to

make a lot of mistakes before the service can become opaque to His Light. I know that His Power is stronger than our errors.

From Rev. Marc Fortin — The Gift of the Primiz

Editor's note: The Primiz is the first celebration of the service by a newly consecrated priest.

All the wonderful guidance and working through the sacraments during the preparation semester were very helpful for me to get closer to the words and movements that live in the sacraments as realities.

I can only hold what I am open to receive.

The inner letting go of my point of view that is needed for there to be a space to receive what wishes to enter, fell like gentle rain on dry soil in that time. The community, the directors, my fellow ordinands, my family, visiting priests, all the conversations, support, and effort that poured towards us/me in those months are still resounding, helping me understand these realities of Christian renewal.

I always felt supported and sheltered by all these people.

As much as they would like to help and do help, there are thresholds that I must decide to walk through and receive the responsibility and consequences.

And the loneliness of separation can be felt for a time.

This was the feeling after ordination — standing in the vestry waiting to enter for my *Primiz*. That quiet space before entering, all the substances are prepared, everyone is sitting in the chapel in silence, the servers stand at the ready watching the clock. I would have thought I'd be nervous or weak in the legs, but the feeling was a mix of loneliness and "I'll do the best with what I've got."

And I said a little prayer: *please help me*.

As I stood there the loneliness lifted and an image arose in my thoughts. The building began to fall apart, cracks and crumbling walls, distant sounds of sirens, waves of chaotic activity, in my mind's eye the world was falling apart. The incredible paradox is that I never felt more sheltered and carried in my life than in this moment of witnessing this, and all those facing the altar in this vision were similarly sheltered and not bothered by all the destruction.

I now felt warmly surrounded walking into the chapel shielded by this/these presence(s) that extended to all. And now a new appreciation for the service follows me, and I look forward to celebrating with all those who are present.

The Importance of Legacy Giving

Jonathan Hilton

I would like to introduce to you the efforts being done by a group of volunteers who form a Legacy Giving Committee on behalf of the North American Christian Community Regional Board, and to share with you one legacy story that has made an impact. I am currently the co-facilitator for this Legacy Committee which is composed of 13 volunteers from congregations across North America as well as from some of our affiliates. Almost every congregation is represented. We also are joined by a few Regional Board members. We meet via Zoom every few months to discuss how to encourage members to consider leaving a gift to the Christian Community in their end-of-life planning. If you ask at your next community meeting, who is the coordinator for your congregation, they are available to help you with questions and materials around making a legacy gift. The Administrator for the Regional Board, Trish Mooney, who coordinates committee work, is also available for any questions or materials you might need: giving@thechristiancommunity.org

Why are legacy gifts so important to the Christian Community of North America?

As George Riley wrote in the previous newsletter, a Central Fund was established for the North American region when the decision was made to share the retirement expenses of priests region-wide, rather than placing this responsibility on each individual congregation. The Central Fund also carries the expenses of the North American Coordinator (Lenker), Rev. Jonah Evans, as well as some support for future initiatives and our region's share of support for the worldwide Movement. The Regional Board is tasked with administering this fund. At present, each congregation is asked to contribute 22% of its previous year's income to support these needs. But these contributions make up only 66% of the needs of our retired priests and their dependents, and only 39% of the total regional expenses. So where is the remaining 61% of the funding for regional needs going to come from? **The only other source for supporting our retired priests and the work of the Lenker is from legacies – bequests made by members in their wills. This continued legacy support is necessary to the future of our North American Movement.**

Legacies can be left totally to a local congregation or totally to the Central Fund of the Regional Board to support retired priests and the Lenker. Your gift can be allocated in your Will as you choose. If 100% of your legacy is gifted to your congregation, then 25% of that gift will automatically be sent for the needs of the Central Fund. No matter how you choose to leave a gift, it will serve a great purpose and meet a great need. It is your way of continuing to support the work of The Christian Community even after you have departed this earthly life!

In 2023, The Christian Community of New York received a significant legacy gift from David Ralph, a master of music who had been the pianist for our congregation in New York City for many years and often performed piano concerts for our community. I share here excerpts from the homily delivered at the funeral by Rev. Gisela Wielki, December 5, 2022:

Many of you are probably familiar with David's many credentials and achievements, the breadth and variety in his musical career as a very talented organist and gifted choral master, singing coach, ingenious and fun-loving improviser, Irish band player, accompanist with the New York Choral Society, the Oratorio Society of New York City and for some of the great musical celebrities in various musical genres, the list goes on. Of course, David has left behind a life replete with incidents and anecdotes talking about his intelligent wit, his wry and mischievous, and at times irreverent humor. The latter is often available to truly reverent people. And David was a reverent, even devout person. His inclination was to search for answers in a world beyond the boundaries of the sense-world.

Several decades ago, a student, and then lifelong friend of his, rented a room from a woman who dabbled in all kinds of savory and not so savory psychic practices. David immediately discerned that this did not align with his spiritual inclinations. Yet, it was here that he found the book that brought him to the teachings of Rudolf Steiner, known as Anthroposophy.

David combined in a wonderful way a gentleness, kindness, an empathy to feel and intuit, how else can one give voice to music? In his tutoring sessions he was always extremely generous and tended to share his broad understanding of music with self-effacing humor. But he also met those he coached in singing and as a musician, accompanist, and choral master with an exacting and demanding expectation.

He had an analytical mind. And anyone who experienced and worked with him and under his tutelage would certainly attest to it. His expectations and standards in his choral work were legendary. He was respected and loved for it. His knowledge of music was vast. His speaking voice had a special quality. Someone said: like an oboe. He was an artist, a musician through and through. In a very recent email, he commented: You hear a piece of music and in it just a phrase suddenly hits you and you get that deep sense that it is not about tonality, but this is beauty.

In the hospital there was a time when although fully lucid he could not articulate his words. It was during that time that I came to appreciate his hands and his long fingers and especially the distinct use of his index finger, when he wanted to make a point. It was the pointing index finger which the painters of the Renaissance introduced us to, as God's finger in Michelangelo's creation of Adam, or in Leonardo da Vinci's John the Baptist on the Rock, or in Matthias Gruenwald's Isenheim Altar painting in which the already deceased, and larger than life John the Baptist, points very distinctly to the one on the cross. The idea that a spirit dies when a human being is born, and a human being dies when a spirit is born was self-evident for David. Birth and death, both are associated with pain, the birth pangs of a new existence.

We celebrate here David's transition from one existence into another. It is a welcome celebration into a world in which he will now work as spirit among spirits. We could also say with angelic beings. And we can only imagine the sound of such musical collaboration.

David's legacy gift to the New York City congregation was a life-saver. The year he died and left his gift, our congregation was required by the city to replace the entire gas system in our 4-story townhouse community building on West 74th Street due to a gas leak. The cost was about \$95,000! Without the godsend of David Ralph's legacy we would have been in deep trouble. But his gift covered the costs of most of this building repair work.

This is only one example of what a legacy gift can provide as a kind of safety net or reserve fund for those times of crisis in a congregation, or to help with a new initiative or new building. These congregation gifts are important, however the ongoing need of supporting our retired priests and spouses and our Lenker is also urgently needed. Your legacy gift to the Christian Community Central Fund can ensure the sustaining life and health of our movement throughout North America.

On behalf of the Legacy Committee,
Jonathan Hilton, New York City congregation

A Michaelmas Festival on a Grand Scale

Rev. Carol Kelly

What is the call of Michael in our time? How can we create a Michaelmas Festival which will “move mountains?” What is the source of the creative process? In Hillsdale we decided to explore the possibility of a new kind of Michaelmas celebration. So The Christian Community and the Anthroposophical Branch collaborated on a Festival at Mettabee Farm on Saturday, September 28th.

The questions became: How do we unite earthly circumstances with heavenly circumstances? How do we reach up to Michael, that he might hear us and perceive the light radiating from our hearts as he reaches down to us? We took up the courage to become “Socially Creative” on a Grand Scale, to invite the participants to take a risk, to create on the spot something out of themselves for the Michaelmas Festival Celebration.



We were divided into groups, randomly, except for the school-aged children, who formed their own separate group. Each group went into a “workshop” for two hours, not of their choosing! There was theater (improv), children’s theater, painting, instrumental improv, and clowning. In the evening, the presentations were offered to a larger audience. They were poignant, beautiful, touching, moving and courageous!



We then headed down to a bonfire, where we were met by youths with huge banners, red, white, yellow and pink, leading us to a grassy hill, where we were met by the torch-bearers who led us still further up the hill. We were singing the whole time, “Firmly on the Earth I Stand.” Then came a huge dragon, who tried to bring us down, and scattered the people marching up the hill. Then Michael appeared at the top of the hill and the dragon was overthrown. The torch-bearers made a “sword of light” in front of the Michael figure (a puppet made by young people).

The event was ground-breaking for us. It did not exactly move mountains, but perhaps it pointed to a direction we could follow. We will keep trying to serve Michael in whatever ways possible and we will hold in our hearts with joy the inspirational “launch” received by all who attended this spectacular event!

Rev. Carol Kelly
The Hillsdale Congregation



Our Struggle with Evil

Rev. Lisa Hildreth

A contemplation inspired by chapter 6 of Paul's Letter to the Ephesians ("put on the full armor of God") and The Lord of the Rings, by J.R.R. Tolkien.

In the book, *The Lord of the Rings*, it is one of the smallest and most humble characters, a hobbit named Frodo Baggins, who is given the most difficult task — to carry the Ring of Doom into the heart of the realm of Evil, and destroy it by casting it back into the fires in which it was forged.

One could say that Frodo is, at first, well protected when he leaves the Elvish realm of Rivendell on his quest. He wears a priceless mail shirt forged of mithril under his clothing. And he is accompanied by a wizard, an elf prince, a sturdy dwarf, a great warrior, a ranger (who is also heir to an ancient kingdom), and three of his dearest hobbit friends.

But as events unfold, it becomes clear to Frodo that his presence, as carrier of the ring, puts his companions in great jeopardy. And in a moment of selflessness, Frodo decides that he must set off on his own... until his companion Sam finds him, and the two hobbits travel on towards the evil land of Mordor.

After many trials, Frodo and Sam gain entry to Mordor. But as soon as they do, Frodo is captured and imprisoned. Now Frodo is truly alone and defenseless. Naked. Yet in an unforeseen way, his mithril mail shirt continues to protect him, as its great value sparks a war among his captors — giving Sam the chance that he needs to rescue him. His clothing gone, Frodo is forced to don the garb of his captors, but when their armor proves too heavy for him, Frodo flings it away.

For the rest of the journey, all outer armor, all outer protection is gone and only the forces within the hearts of Frodo and Sam remain. This is the moment when their *true armor*, the armor of God, shines out.

Again and again, their uprightness and humility allow them to resist the temptation to claim the evil power of the ring as their own. Their courage allows them to continue their task, even in the face of exhaustion, hunger, thirst and constant danger. And although the burden of bearing the ring takes away all Frodo's joy and hope, Sam continues to find these virtues in small things, in spite of seemingly insurmountable odds.

And it is, in the end, Frodo's deep love and compassion for all living things that saves them, and their world. For it is Frodo who again and again has compassion for Gollum, even saving the wretched creature's life — Gollum, who once possessed the ring, and was driven by it to treachery, madness and murder. Yet without Gollum, Frodo and Sam would have never reached their goal. For a time, he was their guide into the land of Mordor. And in the final moment, when Frodo is too deeply held by the evil power of the ring and is unable to throw it into the fire in which it was forged — it is Gollum, who unwittingly completes Frodo's task, as he battles Frodo for possession of the ring, gains it, and then losing his balance, falls with it into the fire.

And so it is that the smallest of beings, possessing the greatest of hearts, succeed in the face of great evil — not by trying to match its strength, blow by blow, but through the power of uprightness, humility, courage, hope, and love.

Forming a Vestment Sewing Circle

Rev. Daniil Kalinov

Dear Members and Friends of The Christian Community,

As you have probably noticed, a period of expansion has begun in our Christian Community in North America. Recently a congregation in the Washington state was officially founded. Soon, two new congregations will also appear in the south. And one can hope that that is not the end of it! But with this expansion, many needs also arise. Here, I want to address just one. The need for vestments!

We all know that each congregation needs quite a few vestments: servers vestments, chasubles, and mantles are required for the sacramental life. And although sometimes the vestments can be obtained second-hand, that, of course, is not a permanent solution. In the end, someone needs to sew them! Right now, we are blessed to have Maria Fili, a local dressmaker in Springfield, MA, who trained in Germany to sew vestments for The Christian Community. However, lately her work only allowed her enough time and energy to make the priest vestments for the ordinations — albs and cassocks. That means that for now we mostly have to rely on the people in Germany for chasubles and mantles.

This all points to a very definite direction — we need sewing workshops, where people can learn how to sew vestments.

There is no definite plan yet. It seems possible that some of the workshops can happen on Zoom (especially ones for sewing the server's vestments) and some in person. However, it would be very helpful for me to know who is interested in participating in such workshops. So, if you are interested in learning to sew vestments yourself, feel free to email me at dkalinov@thechristiancommunity.org. Also, please share this with anyone you think might be interested in such an endeavor.

I know, for one, that I myself am very much interested in learning this craft and will be glad to find others who would love to learn it with me!



The Sword, a Michaelmas Story

Rev. Matthias Giles

Victor lived his whole life in a cottage by the edge of a forest. He lived alone with his mother, for his father had died before he knew his son. Victor knew that people in the village whispered and muttered about his mother, for she had come from foreign lands, though from where none seemed to know. Still people would come to her with ailments they couldn't heal. And, more often than not, they would grow well again after they left her cottage with a packet of dried herbs or a salve. As a child, Victor would watch his mother in the garden singing and speaking fondly to the plants and flowers as though she knew them. He would listen to her wondrous stories in the winter months as she mended and sewed by the hearth, warmed by the fire that never went out. Summer or winter, day or night, that fire always danced on the hearth.

The village and the farmland round about had flourished for generations. The people were content and their eyes were bright. It used to be that the farmers would bring their seeds to be blessed at the chapel before they sowed them in their fields, but this tradition was slowly forgotten. Still, for some years the fields would bear carpets of golden grain and gardens yielded vegetables that nourished.

Just across the sea from the village there was an island. Stark and barren it was. The old ones of the village said that long ago it was lush and full of birds and flowers. It was said that the scent of its flowers and the songs of its birds would waft across the waters to the village. But even the old ones had not seen it so in their days, for long ago it had become the home of a dragon that burned all to waste and trampled the ground as it paced until it became hard-packed earth where no seed could grow.

In the last years, however, it seemed that the waste and death of the island had crept over the sea to the fields of the village. For fall no longer seemed to lead to spring. The seeds planted in the earth would sprout and grow, and even blossom, but they formed no seed for the following year. And what fruits they bore were hard and withered. The people of the village grew thin, the grain mill ceased to turn, and the eyes of the people grew empty and dim.

That winter Victor grew from a boy to a youth. He sat by the fire that always burned in the hearth and in the dark evenings his mother told, night after night, of a strange story. She spoke of a great battle that was waged in the heavenly realm, how a great dragon reared up against Michael the messenger of God. The battle raged as the great angel fought against the dragon. She spoke of Michael casting the dragon down from the heavens and how stars fell to the earth. By the light of the fire she spoke in words both harsh and beautiful how at last Michael had sent down to earth his own sword, forged from the metal of stars, to pursue the dragon. Night after night she told these stories and Victor's heart thrummed within him.

When at last the ground thawed and the weather grew warmer, of all the land around the village only his mother's garden seemed to remember spring.

Not long after, Victor's mother came to him and said, "It is time, my son, to find your way in the world." And he knew that it was so. She gave him a satchel and a loaf of bread, a hunk of cheese and a bit of salt tied in a cloth. So Victor went out and he worked for the people of the village, learning their crafts. He learned to pump the bellows of the blacksmith and haul the nets of the fishermen by the sea. He began to see and feel their poverty and sorrow, how their faces were drawn and their eyes had lost their light.

And so it was that one day he sought out the comfort of the forrest for his midday meal. Leaning his back against the trunk of a tree, he took out a bit of bread and a few grains of salt. As he ate he thought of the people of the village and his heart yearned to help them. So still and quiet he was, that a little white dove flew down beside him. Smiling at the little bird, he broke a bit of his bread and handed it to her. But as she took it in her beak, a crow flew out of the bushes and snatched the bread from her beak chasing her into the air. The youth leapt up, shouting at the crow, and ran to follow after them. He did not go far, but when he stopped and looked about him, he found himself in a strange place. It was a small grove he had never seen. Along one side there rose a wall of craggy rock. As he looked, a figure stepped out from a crack in the rock. Victor saw before him a man, or perhaps a creature, that seemed to have been hewn out of the very rock from which he stepped. The face that looked at him was neither kind nor cruel, but strange and surely ancient.

“You are in search of something I see. Mayhap I can help you find what it is you seek. For I know of hidden things. The veins of the earth and the very heartbeat of the earth is my domain.” He spoke with a voice that rasped and rumbled as though long unused for speech.

“Perhaps what you say is so,” said Victor. “ I would happily learn what you know.”

“It is not for the faint of heart,” replied the figure gruffly. “But to those who do not shrink from darkness the heart of the earth will yield her secrets.”

The craggy figure beckoned, and Victor followed him into a crack in the rock. As they turned into a tunnel, Victor felt his breath catch in his throat and his heart skip in his chest, for he had never felt such darkness. Hardly could he stand the darkness. But, slowly, he found his eyes could begin to see. “You must learn to see with other eyes,” his teacher said.

So the strange man became his teacher.

Each day he followed his teacher deeper into the earth, and learned the ways of rock and stone. He learned to see the veins of shining metals and the sparkling crystals that would guide his seeing with the finest light. As time went on, his eyes learned to see with just the tiniest illumination.

After three months of working thus, one day he followed his teacher into the tunnel, deeper than ever before. There the tunnel opened into a great chamber, large as a cathedral, with spires and icicles of stone. Here in this chamber his teacher lit a candle. Victor marveled, for the whole room sparkled and glinted like many-colored stars. Three tunnels led from that vast chamber deeper into the earth. For one month, with naught but the light of that candle, he worked with his teacher in the tunnel that went to the left. He hauled rocks from the depths into the light of the sun. He hammered and chipped at the stone. For another month he worked with his teacher in the tunnel that went to the right. But never did his teacher lead him to the third tunnel that lay between the other two.

Victor began to feel that something from that third tunnel was calling to him. Day after day, he yearned more and more to enter the tunnel but still his teacher did not lead him there.

One evening, when his teacher was away, Victor took the candle and walked to the entrance of the third tunnel. Down, down, down he walked. He walked until the candle that he carried burned low. Soon the flame wavered and then went out. He was plunged into darkness – a darkness darker than any darkness he had know before. For the first time since the moment he entered the rock, his breath caught and his heart stopped in his chest. Fear rose up in him and

he did not know where he was or which way lead back to the surface of the earth. For a moment he thought all was lost.

Then a memory rose up in him: the fire in the hearth where he sat with his mother. That fire had always burned and never went out. As he thought of that fire his heart warmed as though it glowed in his chest. He straightened his back and feeling with his hand on the wall, he began to walk until he came again into the great cavern where he could see in the darkness with his eyes. Up to the surface he ran and breathed in the air of the forest.

Another week went by, and still his teacher did not lead him to the mouth of that tunnel. Still it seemed to call to him. At last, Victor knew what he must do. That night, the moon was dark. He walked out of the rock and through the forrest until he came to his mother's cottage. He opened the door and came to the hearth where burned the fire that never went out. There his mother sat. She smiled and her eyes were bright with knowing, though neither spoke. Taking the iron tongs from beside the hearth Victor knelt and drew from the flames a single ember. With a nod to his mother he walked into the darkness.

Into the rock he went, down to the great chamber that opened like a cathedral under the earth. He looked to the tunnel to the left and the tunnel to the right, and strode into the mouth of the third. Holding the ember before him it shone with a quiet light. It opened the darkness before him just enough for him to keep his courage.

Down, down, down he went, how long he could not say, deep into the heart of the earth. He walked until it seemed that another light began to grow before him. The tunnel narrowed and he had to crouch, and finally crawl. The path turned and opened into a small cave. There, he saw a light before him. A figure dressed in white sat behind a low altar. The ceiling was so low that Victor went down upon his knees. He saw a cross shining upon the little altar. It seemed to shine with the light of a thousand stars. As he looked, he saw that it was a sword.

The angel in white spoke: "Long have you wandered through darkness, but you have carried a light that darkness could not quench. Here before you, at the deepest heart, lies the Sword of Michael. He placed it here for human beings to find. To it alone will the dragon yield up its life. Take it up and carry it over the earth."

Victor placed the undying ember on the altar next to the shining sword. Then he grasped the hilt and lifted the sword from the altar. The blade shone with the light of a thousand stars. He turned and began to walk, the sword shining before him.

His path up to the surface seemed to take but a moment. There, at the entrance of the cave his teacher stood before him and his voice had a new gentleness when he spoke: "I see you have found what you were seeking. One thing more I have to teach you." And he told the youth of the dragon on the island and whence it had come. He taught him that there was one place in its hide where it was vulnerable. There he must strike it with the sword so that the dragon would yield up its life.

Filled with certainty, Victor strode to the edge of the sea. As the sun was rising, he pulled a boat into the water and made his way across the sea to the island. Drawing near, he could see the dragon making his way across a great track, smoke and flame rising before him. As the dragon came, Victor crouched in a pit in the earth along the track.

In a moment, the dragon was upon him and he saw the place where he must strike. He did not let the moment pass, but plunged the sword up through the scales of the dragon. The blood of

the dragon slipped down the blade. The dragon roared a mighty death roar and reared in anger and defeat. Victor leaped from the pit as the dragon tossed its head. Drops of blood flew from its neck. Victor held his hand before his face, but a drop of its venomous blood fell on his hand. It stung and burned, and without thinking, Victor put it in his mouth to ease the pain.

When he pulled his hand away, he saw a most strange and wondrous thing. The dragon seemed to rise up. Its scales seemed to change. Like petals they looked, like bright and colorful flowers that flew like butterflies. The whole form of the dragon rose into the air, like a great flock of birds taking flight from a field. And so it was. He saw it was hundreds of birds. Their wings flashed with color and their songs filled the air of the island as they had not done for many long years. Upward they flew, wheeling and singing, as the form of the dragon drew apart and disappeared into the clouds. Victor could hear in their voices more than music, for the very language of the birds was opened to him. He listened as they sang of the green of the plants and the breath of the air, of all the beauty of the land.

When finally he looked down again where he stood, Victor saw a great mound lying in the dust. He walked toward it and found that it was a great pile of seeds and golden grains.

All the people of the village rejoiced when they learned what Victor had done. They gathered the grain in their boats. Once again they took it to the chapel to be blessed and they sowed it in their fields. The following spring, all the land burst forth in sprout and bloom. That year the orchards were full of fruit and the fields were golden with grain. A light shone in the eyes of the villagers and a warmth grew in their hearts. And when the wind was right, the sweet scent of blossoms and notes of birdsong floated over the sea to the village from an island as lush as paradise.

News from The Seminary of The Christian Community in North America

This year we welcome six *Walking with Christ* students (Year Two), nine *Knowing Christ* students (Year One), twelve *Awakening to Christ* students (Distance Learning Program) and one intern. The *Awakening to Christ* DLP course also has an audit option, where others are invited to hear the presentation portion of class. Several hundred people are tuning in and receiving the recordings each week.

We also extend a warm welcome to our third co-director, Rev. Emma Heirman, who will be joining Jonah Evans and Patrick Kennedy in late summer, 2025. Emma joined Jonah and Patrick on their annual directors retreat and was willing to be recorded for one of *The Light in Every Thing* podcasts. Here is [a link](#) to Part I of their special conversation on our Patreon page. We are very grateful as we imagine the many gifts that Emma will bring to the seminary!

As Jonah and Patrick describe in their introduction to the last seminary newsletter, much of what happens in the life of the seminary is hidden from view. Yet, deep and life changing transformation is taking place in the realm of soul. These mysteries also form the foundation of the sacraments. Therefore, they are something we can all sense and take part in, as we strive to be “made in His image.” The students have generously welcomed us into their wrestlings and transformations through their offerings in the [seminary student newsletter](#). The new student blog will also begin again shortly. You can subscribe [here](#). Thank you for your interest and support!

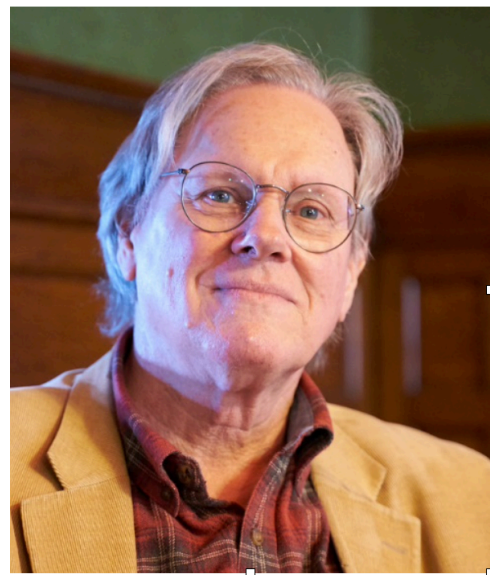
Funeral Address for Rev. James Hindes

Given in Denver, Colorado on April 30, 2024 by Rev. Emma Heirman

Dear family, friends and colleagues, dear community of Jim Hindes,

We stand before a life that sought both inner and outer warmth and light with so many of his steps. One of the many, many stories Jim told me about was how Denver could not get hot and sunny enough for him. He would get in his car, one of his favorite places to be, and do one of his favorite things, go on a good long road trip. He would drive himself hours away to Arizona, because there it would be, if he was lucky, 115 degrees. His body, soul and spirit hungered for the sun. And the angels gave him a life where his own need could be transformed into offering, where through his own hunger, his deeds could grow into light and warmth for others, and ultimately for God Himself.

Jim came into this life heralding the coming of the season of the greatest herald of all: John the Baptist. It was June 23, 1947, Napa, California, the beginning of summer and the longest days of the year. He didn't come into the world alone, he was accompanied by his twin sister, Sunny (a sister named Sunny!). The two had each other, for what would be a most difficult of childhoods. Their father died before they were two years old, and their mother remarried a man who had only anger, contempt and violence for the two. This rejection of the twins permeated their mother as well and the light and warmth that can pour forth from parents onto their children was instead darkness. Jim, though her twin, was like a big brother to Sunny, protecting her as best he could. The two left the home their junior year of high school to live with another family until they were both able to go to college early. The orbit between them stretched to greater distances from time to time throughout their lives, but they deeply wove the threads that connected them and embedded one another in each other's families. Sunny was always home with Jim. Jim especially treasured the paintings Sunny created, and indeed when you see them throughout Jim and Vicki's home you can see why: there is a tender light permeating them, offering itself to the viewer.



From the beginning, Jim had an inquisitive, scientific mind. When he was thirteen, an old friend of the family gave him an old marine band radio, built in the '40s before printed circuit boards and microchips. With screwdrivers and pliers he dismantled it, discovering within thick wires, large resistors, capacitors, all the basic components that manipulated the power called electricity. He could behold with his own eyes what he called "incarnated intelligence." It was his first conscious experience of wisdom. To understand the wisdom in nature well enough to serve human purposes — this was thrilling! He found his first love: wisdom found in the laws of the physical world.

Jim's first religious experience happened not in church, but while reading — perhaps unsurprising. It was a novel, most likely science-fiction, his favorite genre at the time. As he was reading, a thought came to him: "The story I am reading in this book is much like the world in which I am currently living: there are people, events and thoughts. Now the author of this book,

the creator of the story, is standing one level of existence above the story he is composing. I wonder if the world and story of which I am a part also has a creator or composer existing one level of being above my world?" This thought was followed by a feeling of awe, and the thought, "Well, of course!" This feeling of awe was his first conscious experience of faith.

From there, Jim took off running. He overflowed with enthusiasm to know all he could about this world and its creator, finding his way into philosophy, and finding where ideas took his breath away and where they fell short, the greatest fall being: knowing there is wisdom, but not believing in it, having no faith; light without warmth.

Jim was a sensitive soul, and perhaps the stresses of his early life left wounds on his being. His skin suffered greatly. He struggled with psoriasis his whole life, the early treatment of which left him with large amounts of arsenic in his body. He also bore a speech block, a stutter, that would be his life-long companion and work. There was an element of his being that was arrhythmic. It was most noticeable in his daily patterns of life and in his breathing. One could hear Jim audibly sigh frequently, trying to bring his breath into balance.

Jim's enthusiasm was not limited to the world of thought. He was also a great athlete. In high school he played football, ran track, and while he was independent socially, he had a circle of philosophically-minded friends, including his life-long friend Phil Wharton who introduced him to the work of Nietzsche in the eighth grade. He caught the eye of a particular young woman, who saw in him a wounded soul, with a heart of goodness and wide-ranging intelligence, a diamond in the rough. Cindy saw him. Jim was like a butterfly – flying from interest to interest, only sticking around where true nourishment was to be found, and doing so with intense focus. His focus eventually found Cindy too.

Jim and Cindy went to Berkeley together, discovered the work of Rudolf Steiner who became his life-long greatest teacher, and soon found out about the local anthroposophical branch in San Francisco and The Christian Community gatherings in Sacramento. The sacrament blew them away – here was something *alive*. The power of wisdom and faith, light and warmth. Life. Jim and Cindy, along with other young friends from Berkeley quickly doubled the size of that small church community! They were married in The Christian Community in 1970, and worked for two years to save money to go to Europe so they could both attend the Seminary in Stuttgart, Germany.

Now, I'm not sure you know this about Jim, but he was *very* American. So it was 1972, when two idealistic young anthroposophists on fire for the Spirit of Christ arrive in Stuttgart, southern Germany, the land of form and order, the correct and incorrect way to do things, and as the fates would have it, no one was there to greet them at the Seminary. They were on break and had no idea they were coming! It was quite a beginning.

While Cindy had chameleon-like qualities with her accent and personality, Jim did not. He struggled. He did not naturally absorb the language and the culture, and so he worked incredibly hard to learn. Like most things, he had to meticulously think his way through all the elements of this new experience.

The young couple received the recommendation that Cindy wait to go to the seminary, and Jim start. So they proceeded in this way, Cindy dedicating her self and her life also to The Christian Community, standing beside Jim and beginning and holding their family. And so began what would ever and again be Jim's saving grace: his family.

Daniel came first, arriving during those seminary years in Germany. Kevin next when they moved to Bristol, England for Jim's first sending as a priest. Susanna came shortly after they moved to Esslingen, Germany for his second sending – a wonderful time for Jim developing collegial relationships, especially with one of his great mentors: Diether Lauenstein. Then, during their nine years in New York City, came Bettina and Rosie. The family was complete.

Jim was determined to offer his children what he had not had: warm attention, interest and support. He spent his life as a father, and then grandfather, learning how to do this. His efforts did not always hit the mark. That big enthusiasm he had could be too much, his presence, the strength of his convictions unwittingly choking out the room for tender growing thoughts and feelings. He also had the tendency to say whatever he thought, and because he truly meant no harm, could be caught by surprise when his words did harm. He could do that very human thing: say the thing that would pierce. This was a painful, challenging sphere of learning for him. And he never stopped trying. He was relentless. This was a man who was going to be there for people, offering his time, money, interest, and his favorite: ideas. This of course included his mistakes, and his efforts at making amends when he was able to see and understand his error.

After nine years in New York City, the next sending took the family of seven to Great Barrington, Massachusetts, to found a congregation. There, all his efforts went to developing a community; he would be their first full-time priest. This was a great lesson for him to practice loving what *is*, and tremendous hard work. It was also a time of great sacrifice for the family, who got by on very little. Though there were challenges and hardship, there also was human connection. This reaffirmed the life experiences he had of finding his people wherever he went. He formed life-long relationships in every community he served.

As their children became more independent, Cindy's impulse to serve Christ at the altar stepped forward again. She left the family for a time to complete her training in Germany, the only place one could study then, and after her ordination in 1997, the two, now both priests, were sent to Los Angeles, California.

This was the sending where Jim couldn't quite find his feet. Indeed, the ground under his feet was shaking. His wife was now his colleague, which changed the dynamics of the relationship between home and congregation. And the North American priest circle was going through tumultuous upheaval and uncertainty with its regional and international leadership. Jim's faith in what he had said yes to, his marriage and his priesthood, was in battle. He also was quite sick during this time, when he suffered a kind of burnout, being plagued with exhaustion and brain fog for close to a year. Through this time in LA, however, he continued to find ways to proclaim. He taught high school math and physics, another great love of his.

Jim's life seeking for love and recognition found depths of darkness in this time in LA, and of his own initiative, he found his way initially temporarily to Denver, Colorado. After one year away, it became clear LA was not to be his place, and that his marriage to Cindy had ended. While this was an extremely painful reality, Jim and Cindy would find their way through their separation, remaining involved parents in their own ways, and grandparents. They also remained colleagues of course, and supported each other in their priesthood for all the years that followed. They had the remarkable maturity and caring to find ways to still come together as a family, and see one another clearly for who they truly were becoming.

The year 2001 was a fresh start for Jim. His move to Colorado opened new doors to his being. Here, his love of geology began to unfold in earnest. His love of Christ community unfolded in

the Denver and New Mexico congregations, and significantly, his love of Vicki unfolded, who would become his wife for the rest of his life. Though for Vicki, it was more of a high speed train, and less of an unfolding. Vicki had a way of calling Jim out on his stuff that he could take, and even make adjustments from. He could admit to her, coming home from a meeting, "Oh dear, I did it again. I said the wrong thing." They shared a sense of humor and trust in God that allowed them to breathe through the hard things, and go forward, motivated to try again.

Jim would share with people his understanding of the working of destiny in his own biography. He understood that his very difficult childhood offered him the opportunity to be able to develop compassion. He believed that without it, he would have developed an unbridled arrogance. There is evidence all around him and his life of this compassion.

Jim and Vicki built a kind of family that was so generous, you could ask them, "who *isn't* part of your family?" Their neighbors, people who worked on their house over the years, healthcare providers, recognized that these were people who loved and respected striving human beings. This kind of care, a deep and true love for the human being, was Jim's guide also as a pastor to his community members, and to his many grandchildren (twenty with one more on the way!).

To how many lives did Jim offer guiding help? So many received his time and best efforts by sitting with him, getting letters, emails and phone calls from him. One of the thoughts that stood out among all he offered was: *prudence says this: (whatever he understood the wisdom of life experience to be). But only you are privy to the wisdom working in your own being.* Such moments as these have worked as gems in many peoples' lives. Many have shared stories of the gifts of prudence he offered, and the freedom he allowed for the guiding light of their own destiny to work, that they may live out of freedom.

Jim's love for The Christian Community, the movement for religious renewal, found its expression in myriad ways, and in so doing also supported his own becoming as a human being. He was always interested in the training for the priesthood, and remained connected to the workings of the seminary and meeting seminary students on their path. He had a knack for finding the students who needed what he could offer: a grounded support — be it with guidance, money, or a place to stay. He was much like a godfather to those on the way who might fall through the cracks without an extra hand to lend interest and care.

His hard work all those years ago learning German not only allowed him to understand anthroposophy in new ways, but to become a professional translator. And so he was often working on a translation of something of Rudolf Steiner's or a Christian Community priest that he believed we absolutely must have in English, and an intelligible translation at that. He was often frustrated by how many helpful and beautiful ideas were translated in such a way that they still just sounded like German, but in English. To him, this was not a *translation*. His gift with the word and his connection to the spirit of America and the English language as well as his own understanding of ideas allowed him to create excellent theological translations that have become a gift for the English-speaking world, and certainly to The Christian Community worldwide. Is there a tricky concept from philosophy or Christianity that you would love to have someone explain to you? Salvation, sin, the life ether? Jim could do that simply and profoundly. His goal with expressing ideas was elegance. Simple and beautiful. Elegant.

Jim's love of God, while it showed itself in his compassion for human beings and his work with ideas, found its most personal expression at the altar. Here he prayed with all his heart. His voice was warm and down to earth. His tone was straightforward and his eyes far away while also deep within. This came through concerted effort, as his speech required ongoing care. If he stumbled over his words, he would take out his writing exercises where he wrote very slowly

and purposeful shapes and letters over and over, which would help his speech to smooth out. His life as a priest asked of him rhythm, especially in praying and meditating the breviary and in the celebration of the sacraments. These activities were cornerstones for his life, for decades supporting his inner and outer life of prayer.

Jim would be very upset if I painted him in any kind of highfalutin way. And so I'll try to ground him even more towards the end here with axioms he expressed, either in word or deed:

- Every person's story tells a story of the divine
- If you are bored, its your fault
- If you go anywhere you might have to wait around, bring a Jack Reacher novel with you
- People who make stuff are often the most spiritual.

When Jim developed cancer, he approached it with interest. As his hormones shifted for his treatment, he marveled at how his experience of the world changed. Colors became much more interesting, and his feelings about them were so much richer! Beauty mattered to him even more. He formed a connection with his hospice nurse, who made sure to bring her son to meet Jim and listen to him share his thoughts, so that one more young person might receive wisdom offered in freedom. His love of life and the earth was so strong, which perhaps expressed itself in his pain and difficulty with leaving his body. His leave-taking was a true labor process, and he had the blessing to have his family hold him closely through it until he breathed out his spirit.

Jim was born in the spirit during the season of Easter on April 25, when the world around us is springing, and light and warmth, his great loves, are returning. He is returning to the Father as Christ did. All his deeds, including the shame that Jim experienced, which he could not look directly at in this life, he is now looking at in the warmth and light of his Shepherd, Christ, the Being of Love. He is the one Jim knows as the bridge to meaning, purpose, understanding, and unconditional, everlasting love.

Yes, so be it.