

Newsletter

No. 5—Christmas/New Year 2005/2006

ANNUAL COMMUNITY MEETING 2005 IN STROUD

In viewing the outside world, our actual eyes are responsible for about 10% of what we 'see' – the remaining 90% is how our brain, and all that contributes to this misunderstood organ, reconstructs what has been mediated by the eye into an experience we think we understand.

The following two reports represent two very contrasting experiences of The Annual Community Meeting, one by Elaine Wood who has participated in this event for the first time, and the other by Peter Burger with his life time of attendance at such events. Together, they start to make a whole – but ~~the~~ perhaps the only way the full experience can be mediated is if we actually attend for ourselves.

WERE YOU THERE: "PORTRAYING THE INVISIBLE"

Some sixty members were drawn by this enigma, others by the question: "How can we offer something of that quality into 'a changing world'?"

As we searched in the darkness for enlightenment we stumbled over very rough ground, sometimes bumping, becoming aware of one another, gradually discovering open spaces, moments calling for trust and individual responses.

So, understanding the 'Why?', 'What?' and 'How?' of daily life began to dawn gently in us as we found that in quietness we could prepare for each new experience and response; seeing and being seen. Then

questions became answers, and answers contained new questions, biographical threads which the "I" can weave into the tapestry of my life.

With consciousness of the Spirit and with the help of Michael in the Act of Consecration of Man, as portrayed in the altar painting, we can receive the invisible element into our hearts and carry this wherever we go on, offering what we have discovered through the darkness as "compost" for the needs of our neighbours here and now, and into the neighbourhood all around us in this bustling needy world.

This weekend we have imagined what it can mean to see and be seen by Michael, Christ in one another. Happiness is never far away; we just need to grasp it, accepting what is given to us in peace. Thereby with Christ we weave our wedding garments and together a tapestry for mankind.

Finally we considered reports from our congregations and all organs of our regional management, seeking development of the process (perhaps called "Compost Notes") which in time will encourage and support the social initiatives of our members, "seeds" in our congregations, regions, community forum, newsletter, management and in "Perspectives", reaching outwards.

We concluded this weekend, grateful for all the riches we had shared, bringing to these days a seed-like spiritual power holding real hope for the future.

Peter Burger, Stroud

A very warm and friendly welcome awaited all the participants at the Annual Community Meeting in Stroud this year. Indeed, this feeling rayed out through the weekend we spent together, exploring the theme, 'Portraying the Invisible'.

By its nature, this theme is difficult to capture effectively; yet bold, courageous attempts were made and enlivened all who came.

The presence and contributions from Reverend Andreas Weymann, one of the Circle of Seven, in Berlin, was of greatest value in our endeavour. His deep devotion to the aims and purposes of The Christian Community, constantly illuminated all that he said and brought to our gathering.

His first talk, 'Seeing and Being Seen', addressed so many of the questions that face us as participants.

He proposed "the love and tenderness of Christ", as the primary, answer. The task in our time is to make the encounter with Him during The Act of Consecration of Man meaningful, through a full embracing of the Michaelic consciousness.

But what does this comprise of? Foremost, our unwavering attentiveness.

Herr Weymann used the example of, "the wedding garment", to suggest how necessary it is that we robe ourselves in a mantle of complete wakefulness throughout the service. We are, at this time, the vehicle for the purposes of the spiritual world. The extent to which it can manifest itself depends on our level of receptive consciousness.

Herr Weymann focused upon the name, Michael: "Who is like God?"

How, the deeds of our sacraments are accountable to The Being, Michael, who fulfill's God's will.

Moreover, the congregation behold the countenance of Christ through Michael's deeds.

The altar paintings were considered in some depth. It was fascinating to view reproductions of Christian Community altar paintings, old and new, from around the world. Herr Weymann described how these are artistic representations of Christ but not the being of Christ himself. Rather, we experience His real presence during the service at Communion. This is when we are not only "seeing" but are also "being seen" by the spiritual world.

Throughout the weekend we enjoyed some lovely singing together, lead by Ingrid Skodbo from Edinburgh. Some beautiful harmonies resonated amongst us which enriched our Sunday service when we sang a Michaelmas song in rounds. There was also a remarkably atmospheric performance of Negro spirituals by the Stroud choir.

On Saturday afternoon, after the regional reports, we had an adventurous departure into getting to know one another more intimately, through artistic activity brought to us by Allmut French. Exploratory group-work enabled us to see, feel and hear what lived in "the other", behind immediate appearances. This concluded with a preview of the Javlensky portraits.

In the evening, Herr Weymann gave us a powerful and poignant presentation of the life and work of the Russian artist, Alexej Javlensky (1864-1941).

Art is so often more fully understood and deeply appreciated when one can live into the artist's biography. All the paintings of Javlensky are testimony to this.

How could the listener not be moved by Herr Weymann's faithful rendering of

Javlenskys life? The beauty we find in the artists soul; the way he spends his whole life struggling to express its content and his mortal courage in his final years are very touching.

He is characterized by a highly unique style that expresses his passionate temperament and mystical conception of art. In worldly terms, he is known for his many abstract paintings of the human countenance. These paintings consist of bold lines on background of colour. One straight line would depict the nose; two horizontals the eyes and what constantly recurs is the main shape, significantly... a cross.

When Javlensky settled permanently in Wiesbaden in 1921, the arthritis which was to paralyze him had set in. Never the less, in real testimony to the power of the human spirit, the artist continued to paint. Herr Weymann demonstrated with gesture how Javlensky managed to paint with his hands outstretched to steady one another, reaching toward the canvas, as if in prayer.

Herr Weymann read out a letter Javlensky dictated on his deathbed. Despite his affliction, he was not bitter but only wanted to speak of the passion and devotion which had burned in his soul throughout his life, in his personal attempt to express the invisible. He had come closer and closer, not so much to a portrayal the human countenance but that of Christ, as symbolized by the cross.

The individual paintings, shown on slides, became like lights on an increasingly arduous journey, each a beautiful pointer to moments and revelations of what lives in the artist's soul.

On Sunday, we began by ringing of small bells with Elizabeth Roberts. In

preparation for The Act of Consecration of man, we inwardly attuned to qualities of sound, evoked by the bells being rung in different ways.

After The Act of Consecration of Man, a concluding address was given by Elizabeth. She brought the threads of our community meeting together by returning to the imagery of the beautiful carpet that Herr Weymann had introduced in his story of The Three Feathers. She reminded us of how in our meetings with one another, we, as a community can and must support each other in unpicking the threads of our personas, and how courage is needed to expose the warp and wefts of our own deeper layers. In this way, we can enrich our understanding of one another not simply as personalities but beings of soul and spirit.

Elaine Wood, Kings Langley

THANKYOU

To all Subscribers who have promptly renewed their subscriptions after the reminder with the last issue. It's lovely to read the notes some of you add to the form, and forgive me for not being able to respond personally. Nevertheless, be assured that they are read and appreciated, before being filed. Yes – despite the wonders of the data base, paper copies are kept, just in case...

**OBITUARY FOR ROBERT PERCY WHITFIELD
10TH JUNE 1919 TO 14TH JULY 2005**

"I was looking at the heavens recently and picked out the Plough gleaming above the Georgia Straits and my eye was drawn to the Pole Star. Quietly twinkling. Quietly guiding travellers throughout time. Dad was our Pole Star. Constant. Reliable. Always there. A guide when one needed it most."

The above words were spoken by one of Robert Whitfield's children at a gathering held shortly after Robert's funeral at Dulas in Herefordshire, where he and Miriam had recently moved to. What a wonderful tribute to a man who had been an inspiration not only to his family, but to so many others, who had met him in various parts of the world, and had appreciated his warmth, depth and his seeking nature. He wasn't one to talk endlessly about his love for music, his interest in bees and in the land, educational issues, his dedication to anthroposophy and the religious life he nurtured, nor about his lifelong love for the starry heavens, but all this was there, had grown and ripened over many years and people sensed it in all that he did and said.

Some of these gifts were given him in the Methodist farming family in which he grew up at Anstwick in North Yorkshire, the youngest of nine children. Some would have been coloured and directed by the climate of life between two world wars – Robert remembered clearly the intensity of his father's voice on being asked, innocently, "who won the war?", as he replied "noone". –

The Second World War was already looming but Robert was in no doubt that he would be a conscientious objector. And, he had meanwhile made a decisive, first con-

nection with the local Theosophy group, which was to lead him to the ideas of Rudolf Steiner on farming, and gradually to a whole new way of looking at, and living, life.

At the Williamston Estate in Aberdeenshire he found work, where many had left due to the owners change to biodynamics, providing the opening for Robert, (and his lifelong friend Alan Dring). After the war their calling to the land continued, now in connection with educational work, as he took on the garden at the Garvald School in the Edinburgh. A diploma in horticulture followed in 1959, with a teacher's certificate at Moray House a year later.

This had also been the path which led to his meeting and subsequently marrying, Miriam, at Garvald in 1945. She had left Germany shortly before the outbreak of war and gone to work on the same Williamston estate.

The home which Robert and Miriam set up and into which the six children were born was a roving home, with many moves from one address to another, in response to new initiatives, new challenges. Yet the family life was maintained, upheld, the fruits of which can be seen today. And only as the children had left home did the long distance travel begin, with spells across the Atlantic and "Down under", before finally settling in Hertfordshire. Robert's health had been weak for a number of years already, but the seeking soul in him and the faithful support of Miriam had kept him going, albeit at a reduced pace.

Robert, Miriam and I would meet regularly at their home for house communion. They both lived with the act of consecra-

tion despite many years of being unable to attend, and they prepared for the visits through daily Gospel study, and following the cycle of the Christian year. Very often Robert would have a question waiting, either to do with the Bible passage or to do with our relationship with the spiritual world, and our preparation for it, questions which he moved deeply within him.

The most recent visits were to Dulas Court, a beautiful country house with lovely gardens, which had been a retirement home for musicians. Here was a piano for Robert, and the opportunity to be out-doors – friends visiting one-day found him in the garden helping with dry stone walling!

All of the children from various corners of the world were able to join Miriam

and Robert in his final days, and created together the body of warmth which surrounded him as he crossed the threshold and during the following three days. At the remembrance gathering a poem of R. W. Trine was read: "In tune with the infinite" which captures something of Robert life-long striving – below is a short extract.

Robert is survived by his wife Miriam and his six children, 17 grandchildren and four great-grandchildren.

Tune your ear

to all the word-less music of the stars...

and to the voice of nature, and your heart

shall turn to truth and goodness, as the plant

turns to the sun

Ralph Waldo Trine

Obit Author

TRIBUTE TO A GOOD FRIEND JOHN PETRIE 25 APRIL 1926 – 02 DECEMBER 2004

On 2nd December 2005 it will be a year since John Petrie died. He faced the challenge of his painful illness over several months with great courage before crossing the threshold.

It was a privilege to share some of this time with him through this journey and to hear of his dialogue with Archangel Michael, the bringer of courage to those individuals who seek his help. Never did John complain, but rather he carried a grace through the entire process. The last few weeks were spent in his home, which he had built himself, together with his wife Jessie.

For many years John and Jessie provided space in their home in Cambuskenneth, near Stirling, to accommodate the Sacra-



ments of The Christian Community in a beautiful chapel.

John was a wonderful craftsman, skilled in working with wood and iron. He carved a sign for The Christian Community for the wall outside his front door; he carved a frame for the Altar picture, and candle sticks, and a small bowl for the incense. He made the censer and the candle snuffer. All this, in addition to the construction of the Altar itself. John's love not only went into making these necessary furnishings for the chapel but also into the preparation of the chapel for the monthly Services, which were held there by Michael Jones, the priest from Edinburgh. Fresh flowers were there, often from John's remarkable garden.

Those of us who attended the Act of Consecration of Man in Cambuskenneth were invited to share the hospitality of John and Jessie afterwards for lunch. John would sometimes recall to us stories of his amazing past. He spoke with great warmth about his childhood in Germany where he grew up very close to nature. This influenced him very much, reflected in his love for working with wood and his garden. As a young man he served in the Army and was taken prisoner during the war, spending his imprisonment in America. When he was released, he was shipped to Scotland, where he made his home for the rest of his life.

During the 18 years of attending the Services in Cambuskenneth, I came to know a very fine friend – one who took the people he associated with into his

thoughts, and lived their situations, bringing support to them when they needed it, but never imposing or intruding. John had made a place for Christ within himself and this he shared unobtrusively and with such grace with those around him.

Over the years Baptisms and Marriages were among the Special Sacraments that were celebrated in the Chapel in John's and Jessie's home, but it was fitting that the final Service to be held in this Chapel was the Memorial Service for John on Saturday 11 December 2004.

The immense gratitude for the friendship which John brought lives on for me, not only in my thoughts, but in using the bowls he so lovingly made, each with the type of wood, the year of making, and his signature engraved on the base.

Dorothy Senior

BRIGITTE TANK

May I please add the following to Sibylle Thackray's sensitive obituary?

"When Brigitte came to this friendly Home, Ken and I were here already and had from the beginning been taken under the wing of Roger Druitt, visiting priest at Kings Langley. In June 2003 he suggested bringing us communion which we accepted with gratitude. We suggested that Brigitte might like to join us which she was very happy to do. The set-up was favourable. The sitting room was prepared for the short service and the bedroom became the vestry. Chandu, Brigitte's Hindu husband came with her for support. It was noticeable ~~how the flailing of her limbs calmed down and~~ at the end what a difference being able to take communion had made to her. She was able to come several times but

then her health deteriorated and she was either too ill or in hospital but we aimed to bear her in our thoughts.'

Michael Tapp's obituary in respect of Ken was also very much appreciated. It was spot on.

Yours sincerely,

Ann Walsh

MEMBERS WHO HAVE DIED

Evelyn Mary Hwer, Nottinghamshire. Ilkeston congregation. 9th March 1914 – 3rd October 2005

Roger Pears on 20th September 2005, Kirkurd Graveyard, near Blythe Bridge, Borders.

Robin Alexander on 14th October 2005, St Peter's Episcopal Church and Eastlands Cemetery, Galashiels.

TEMPLE LODGE

Since St John's day 2004 The Christian Community in London has become one sacramental community. On that day - a Sunday - a festive occasion took place at the church on Glenilla Road. It was attended by all London members and the church was full to capacity. The day was also the 75th anniversary of the celebration of the first Act of Consecration of Man in the English language and on English soil. The festive part honoured in words and music the work of Alfred Heidenreich and Evelyn Capel and the re-uniting of work in London. With respect to services in North London (Glenilla Road) and West London (Temple Lodge) it established a programme and timetable of one Sunday service at Glenilla Road to every three at Temple Lodge, with the festivals taking place alternately. Our London congregation can now expect a regular congregation of 30 to 40 people. This "reunion" sacramentally is reflected in the programme, in a combined servers rota, musicians working together and coordinated planning of festivals. It lays the foundation for exciting and challenging developments. A new administrative and legal structure needs to be formed to support this sacramental union and provide a firm basis to allow for the decades of growth that lie in the future. Peter van Breda is thrilled that this has taken place

and is very much looking forward to working with us further.

Developments in West London are also progressing with the future in mind. The Temple Lodge Club's provision of B&B accommodation for visitors is very popular and our ten rooms are rarely empty. A big change has been to make a new breakfast/dining room with new furniture and cupboards on the ground floor. This replaces, rather sadly for some, the basement dining room. It supports the growing B&B, will cater for an expansion of church activities and is a boon for other meetings that take place. We will have more space available for activities when two extra rooms in an annexe, which belonged to Temple Lodge a century ago, are renovated and returned to our stewardship. A consideration of The Christian Community and a worthy church building and what it means for London is a very active and alive question. The Christian Community needs to form a space that can be a sanctuary providing for the church and a space for all those who want to meet and know more about this movement for religious renewal.

A larger trustee body, with members much more representative of the congregation and church activities is now carrying official responsibility.

Michael Beaumont

Forthcoming

Children's Holiday Camp in Botton Village For 9-12 year olds

From Monday 17th - Wednesday 26th July 2006

Details from Rev Ben van Lieshout 3 Stewarts Place Holywood Co Down

Northern Ireland BT18 9DX

or from our website www.bottoncamp.org

Invitation to an

Inter-Congregational Day Seminar

at the Christian Community, 22 Baylie Street, Stourbridge W. Midlands DY8 1AZ

Saturday 4th February 2006, 10.30-19.30

This day, which had to be postponed from September 2005, will give an opportunity to gather and work with ideals and initiatives central to the future life and growth of The Christian Community, including initiatives which arose in meetings with students from Priests' Seminary in March 2005. One or more of the students will be present.

Bring and share lunch

For ~~For~~ further details contact the preparers:

Gertraud Ekama, Tom Ravetz, Elizabeth Roberts, Kevin Street

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