CIRCLE OF SEVEN
EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

The Christian Community

Movement for Religious Renewal

"...One should be clear that religion, in its living life and living practice within the human community, kindles the soul's consciousness of the spirit." Rudolf Steiner (1917)

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#### THOUGHTS BEFORE WE BEGIN

Seven years have passed since the last international conference, 2010 in Dortmund.

Now "Playing with Fire" in 's-Hertogenbosch, the Netherlands, makes it possible again for people from different continents, cultures and languages to meet one another.

The rituals of the Christian Community are celebrated in many countries around the world today – we have specific people and their destinies to thank for this. But this wide circle of our activity also needs a center that works to perceive and support the circumference. The Circle of Seven strives to be this central organ.

In a time when walls are being built at both inner and outer borders, it is important to build bridges and cultivate inner connectedness.

In a time when communication primarily takes place via global media, it's important to make personal encounters possible: face to face and in the present moment.

This Whitsun, the full circle and the center of our Christian Community also have an opportunity to meet.

The conference theme invites us to come together in a playful, imaginative way, allowing our enthusiasm for the task of the Christian Community to burn within us.

I would like to say a huge "Thank you" to the preparation team in the Netherlands, and to everyone whose financial support has made this festival possible.

May the future of our Christian Community shine into these Whitsun days and be present among us.

For the Circle of Seven, Gisela Thriemer

## "Tradition is sharing the flame, not worshiping the ashes."

Gustav Mahler

"What is renewal but the eternally creative fire of love – which is kindled on our altars time and again?"

Vicke von Behr

#### CONTEMPORARY CHRISTIANITY

Today, religion is often seen as something wholly personal. But there is also a great longing for a religious deepening that transcends boundaries: for a non-denominational, inter-religious spirituality. What does this look like specifically, for us as Christians? How often are people prevented from encountering living Christianity because they primarily associate religion with laws and commandments?

It seems that the age of "should and must" is definitely over – the freedom of the individual, and thus also the responsibility of each one of us, is becoming increasingly important. So where do we stand at the beginning of the 21st century on this issue of religion? And what is the task and the potential of the Christian Community? Our starting point can only be the individual's very own, personal experience: Being touched by the strength of the present, living Christ, together with the experience that it is he who helps us become more and more human.

If, in this sense, becoming Christian means becoming human, and vice versa, Christianity no longer needs to be understood as a "religious party" that is competing and quarreling with others. But to bring this about, we will need to let go of some set, traditional terms, concepts and images, and find others.

Will we succeed in this? Will we increasingly learn to see the "Son of Man" in the Christian God, instead of the "historical Jesus"? The "Son of Man" who, through his all-embracing humanity, awakens the human qualities in every human being?

As a first step, we need to fully appreciate differences. This applies to every person in the congregation – and to the priest's vocation. Because there are many different ways of living out one's priesthood as an "I". People who are seeking this human and priestly becoming through the sacraments can join to form communities. Then, Christian Community comes into being. It comes into being at each Baptism and Marriage, in every Act of Consecration, and at the grave. This type of community cannot be a "private function" – by its very nature, always seeks to integrate rather than to exclude. By taking an active interest in others, even if they feel like strangers, the Christian Community receives "cross-pollination" and inspiration, encouragement to develop further. In this way, our movement wants to contribute to society and help address the tremendous needs of our time. This includes asking a question, again and again: What are people thinking about and hoping for at the periphery, at the circumference of our Christian Community? For all our identification with what connects us in religious life, we also need to distance ourselves from what is familiar: From time to time, we can prepare ourselves to "offer up" our thoughts and concepts so that we are open to receiving new impulses. The Christian Community – whether as a small local group or a worldwide movement - does not exist for itself. It exists for the people and for their needs, as well as for the Earth.

Today, the abyss between spirit and matter is being bridged by many types of scientific research and philosophical insights, so that the words of Rudolf Steiner become more and more apparent:

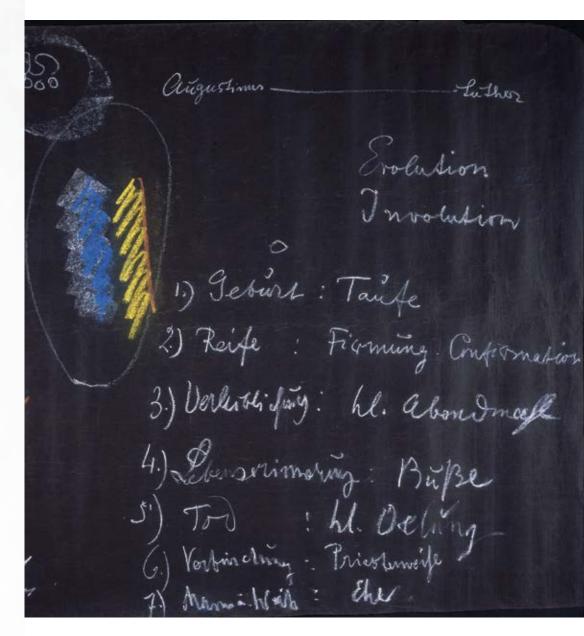
"Spirit is never without matter, matter never without spirit."

As Christians, what does that mean for our image of God, and our religious mission? It contains the hope that our religious life need not be separated from our everyday life – no mere "Sunday Christianity" – but that all of life can be re-enlivened by religion. The rhythms of the day, week and year can experience new strength. Then the human biography, too, with all its phases, new beginnings, crises and farewells can be touched again by this healing reality.

Life with the sacraments, where spirit and matter always work together and interweave, can become a source of inspiration for all areas of life, wherever we may live and work. Right down to economic matters, a brotherly attitude can arise; matter need not be found without spirit here, either. Because the world needs diverse places where this interweaving is cultivated, places where there is more than what is simply necessary – places where the seemingly superfluous can enter life, and make it worth living.

Respect for, and recognition of, individual freedom, an understanding consciousness of sacramental life, and the striving to unite the spiritual and everyday aspects of life – these are the prerequisites for a contemporary Christianity. Through these qualities, the Archangel Michael, the spirit of our time, wants to lead us into the future of Christ's work. And the Christian Community wants to serve him.

Gisela Thriemer



# THE ACT OF CONSECRATION IS CELEBRATED IN THE FOLLOWING LANGUAGES:

EVERYTHING MOVES AND DEVELOPS:
ABOUT 300 CONGREGATIONS AND AFFILIATES,
32 COUNTRIES, 28 LANGUAGES, 468 PRIESTS
(INCLUDING RETIRED PRIESTS)





## TASKS OF THE CIRCLE OF SEVEN

The priestly central leadership of the Christian Community (the Circle of Seven) comprises the Erzoberlenker, two Oberlenkers and four Lenkers.

The tasks of the Circle of Seven include:

- > All questions relating to the rituals, particularly upholding their celebration in the manner agreed upon
- > Admitting candidates into the priesthood through the decision to ordain
- > Liaising with the seminaries, appointing the seminary directors and sharing responsibility for the priest training
- > In cooperation with the regional Lenkers, deliberating and pronouncing the sendings of priests into their congregations, also revoking sendings if necessary
- > Visiting and observing congregations and synods worldwide
- > Determining whether new congregations can be founded

And finally, as Rudolf Steiner said:

"Feeling actively responsible that the work continues to develop."







#### VICKE VON BEHR



I was born in 1949, in the district of Ostholstein, Germany. In Freiburg and Berlin, I studied Economics, Theater Studies, Theology and Social Education. From 1980 onward, I worked with delinquent youth. In 1987, I began my studies at the Seminary in Stuttgart.

Following my ordination in Rostock in 1992, I was sent to Berlin, becoming Lenker for what was then Eastern Germany in 2001 and a member of the Circle of Seven in 2002.

In 2005, Taco Bay was the first Erzoberlenker to step down from his office (the three Erzoberlenkers before him remained in their office until they died). He transferred this responsibility to me. Since then, as I said at my induction, I have tried to work as a living "reminder" so that we do not lose sight of our original task: that of serving Christ and his angels.

## CHRISTWARD KRÖNER



I was born in 1963 in I attended the Waldorf school and graduated in 1982 with Abitur.

I then studied Music and Medicine for several years. also in Hannover. In 1987. I began my studies at the Seminary of the Christian Community in Stuttgart.

Short congregational internships in Munich and Rostock (Germany) followed. In 1989. I spent six months in the North London congregation (UK).

I received the Sacrament of Ordination in 1990, in Stuttgart, then worked for one year in Johannesburg, South Africa. From there. I was sent to Bremen, and in 2002 to Hamburg-Blankenese, where I worked until 2009. From 2002 through 2006 Hannover, Germany, where I was also a seminary director at the Hamburg Seminary.

> In 2005, I was appointed to the Circle of Seven and moved to Berlin in 2010. I occasionally work in the Kleinmachnow congregation.

I am married, with one child and three stepchildren.

It is of special importance to me that the spiritually potent principle of "bearing one another's burdens" can become increasingly active in the congregations. harmonizing and addressing even the specific economic situations of individuals and families.

#### ANAND MANDAIKER

I was born in 1962. in Madras, India, I went to school there and studied Architecture for 5 years at the School of Architecture and Planning.

After receiving the Sacrament of Ordination in 1992. I was sent to Basel, Switzerland, In 2003. I was sent to Tübingen, Germany. I have been a member of the Circle of Seven since 2006.

I moved to Berlin when I was appointed Oberlenker (2010). Since 2006. I have been active as Lenker for Japan, also carrying this office for Australia and New Zealand for several years. I remain closely connected Hinduism, Christianity). to these countries.



Since approximately 2004, I have been teaching at the various Seminaries, mainly on the Gospel of Mark. In many countries around the world, I have spoken on two central topics: interacting with the Gospels in a meditative way, and exploring the connection between religions (Buddhism,

I have two adult children.

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#### MARIE-PIERRETTE ROBERT

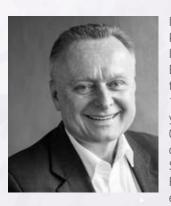


Born in Paris in 1954. I lived there until I had completed my degree in German Language and Literature (1971-1974) at Sorbonne University. I taught German and Music, then worked as a Waldorf kindergarten teacher.

In 1989, I was ordained as a priest. As a congregational priest, I worked in Stuttgart-Nord, Chatou near Paris, Strasbourg, and Paris again. I became a Lenker in 2002, and a member of the Circle of Seven in 2005. I am currently the Lenker for Romania, where the Christian Community will be founded in October 2017.

For many years, I have been actively supporting the music for our rituals; I am responsible for the musicians' meetings that take place at regular intervals. Finding and cultivating appropriate music is a difficult yet beautiful task. In future, I hope that every country and every culture will discover more and more of its own sounds and melodies.

## JAROSLAW J.J. ROLKA



I come from Poland -Krakow is my hometown. I studied Literature and Education at university there. In the summer of 1984. when I was 22 vears old. I met the Christian Community during a vacation in Stuttgart at the Oberlin-Haus. I had already encountered the work of Rudolf Steiner when I was Circle of Seven. 19. This gave my life a spiritual direction. On February 27, 1994, after very intense seminary studies and a long internship, I was ordained as a priest.

My first sending led me to Munich, to a young and vibrant congregation. Later. I was sent to Bochum, a city in the Ruhr region. There, I got to

know another face of Germany, and another way of working together within the Christian Community.

In 2003, I joined the leadership of the Christian Community, first as Regional Lenker for Western Germany, then also as Lenker in the

#### STEPHAN MEYER

I was born on January 8, 1957 in Hannover, Germany, where I attended the Waldorf school through high school (*Abitur*). I received practical training as a farmer – at Hof Dannwisch and Dottenfelderhof – and attended the Stuttgart Seminary.

After becoming ordained as a priest in 1983, I was sent to the congregation in Heidenheim, where I worked until 1990, followed by Stuttgart-Mitte until 2003.



For the next seven years, I was Lenker for the Württemberg region. I joined the Circle of Seven in 2010.

In 2012, I became a director of the Stuttgart Seminary. In addition, I am currently acting as Lenker for the Ukraine.

I am married and have 4 children and 3 stepchildren.

## GISELA THRIEMER

I was born in Stuttgart in 1954 and was able to attend the Uhlandshöhe Waldorf School for 13 years. After studying Biology and History in Tübingen, I began training at the Stuttgart Seminary.

Following my ordination in 1982, I was sent to the Darmstadt congregation, where I have been working ever since.

In 1996, I began to regularly visit the congregation in Georgia (which was then just being founded) and also worked together with the congregation in Namibia in a variety of



ways. For seven years, I was a director of the Stuttgart Seminary: from 2005 until I became a member of the Circle of Seven in 2013. Since 2013 I have also been acting as Lenker for the Nordic region.

One of my impulses is to link the generations within the congregation, and also to make connections to other anthroposophic fields (biodynamic agriculture, education etc.) in order to work together, conscious that "we are all in this together" and working towards the same goal.

## TASKS OF THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE (EC)



The Dutch foundation "Stichting De Christengemeenschap (internationaal)" - known in English as "Foundation The Christian Community (international)" – was founded in 1983. It has head offices in Amsterdam and Stuttgart, and a business office in Berlin. The Foundation forms the legal framework for any tasks of the Christian Community worldwide that extend beyond a given congregation or region. Its bodies are the Council, the Executive Committee and the Coordinators' Circle. Each region worldwide sends up to three delegates to the Council, which meets annually; the members of the Circle of Seven also participate. To form the Executive Committee, the Council elects three people for a four-year term (currently Christine Jost. Christian Maclean and Armin Knabe), the Circle of Seven sends two people (currently Christward Kröner and Jaroslaw Rolka). The Executive Committee meets four to six times a year and appoints members as Chair, Deputy Chair, and Managing Director. The latter is responsible for day-to-day operations.

The Coordinators' Circle is the permanent "finance committee" of the Foundation and as such comprises the financial coordinators from each region. This circle meets twice a year and ensures that appropriate financial resources are provided by the regions. Together with the Circle of Seven, the Foundation's bodies hold the responsibility for the work of the Foundation.

The Foundation's annual budget (about 1.2 million euros) is carried by various types of regular income:

- > Contributions from the regions
- > Donations
- > Third-party contributions
- > Unrestricted legacies
- > Other income and proceeds from vestment tailoring and substance shipment

Worldwide, these resources enable the Christian Community movement to fulfill tasks that are not the direct financial responsibility of congregations or regions.

## According to the financial concept adopted by the Council in 2003, the annual budget should be covered by the contributions from the regions. Regular expenses include:

- > Costs of the Oberlenkers and the Circle of Seven as well as the priesthood (commissions, conferences, newsletter
- > The archive
- > Subsidies for expansion, initial sending, for international relocation and for the seminaries
- > Emergency aid for priests, family members and employees (subsidies for cost of living and special circumstances)
- > Administrative costs (committees, business office)

The Foundation is also approached for financial help in other situations for which the regions do not provide funds.

If unrestricted – or appropriately earmarked – reserves are available, these needs can be met. However, it is crucial that the Foundation's reserves be replenished by legacies, donations or other contributions.

Armin Knabe

#### ARMIN KNABE



In 1957 I was born in Weimar, Germany, and baptized in the Christian Community. After high school (*Abitur*) and unfinished university studies in Transportation, I worked as a tram driver in Dresden for ten years. There I primarily practiced anticipatory driving (a tram has a very long braking distance if no-one on board is to be hurt), estimating sufficient gaps (a rail-bound vehicle cannot swerve) and sticking to the schedule.

From 1988 through 2005, I was active in the administration of the Christian Community retirement home "Rudolf-Frieling-Haus" in Dresden, becoming Director in my last years there.

Since 2000, I have been Regional Coordinator of Eastern (now called Central) Germany. In 2004, within the Executive Committee, I also became Chair of the Foundation.

As the full-time Managing Director of the international Christian Community, I have been based in Berlin since 2005. I try to incorporate my tram-driver skills in my daily work.

#### CHRISTIAN MACLEAN



Born in 1950 in Edinburgh, I grew up bilingually with a German mother and a Scottish father. As a teenager I was responsible for sales of a Christian Community youth magazine, and this gave me an early overview of the communities worldwide. After some time at the seminary in Stuttgart, I was asked to take on the English language publishing of The Christian Community, which had just been reorganized as Floris Books. I led this work from 1976 to 2010 when I handed over management, but still continue working full time as

an editor. I have been a trustee of The Christian Community in Great Britain and coordinator since 2004, and on the Executive Committee of the Foundation since 2012.

In financial matters of The Christian Community, I try to combine religious idealism with pragmatic business experience, and at international meetings occasionally remind German colleagues that ways of working in other countries are sometimes different.

## CHRISTINE JOST



Born in 1960 in Basel, I am the Coordinator of the Christian Community in Switzerland, and Regional Coordinator of Switzerland, Italy, France, Hungary and Spain. I am also a member of the Executive Committee.

Until 2015, I taught high school at Rudolf Steiner Schule Basel with a focus on German, History and Art History (I had received my Master's degree and teaching certificate after studying in Basel and Amsterdam).

In childhood, I first met the Christian Community through the Children's Services, then participated in the youth group of the Basel congregation. After many years of volunteering at children's camps etc. I am pleased to also be contributing professionally to a renewal of religious life. I hope that we in the Executive Committee succeed in helping the work in the "pioneering regions" move forward in a good way.

"In the end, it was through this vision that Rudolf Steiner brought the form of a new Christianity, one that is presently preparing its future greatness, one that will gradually live into the world through the rituals of the Christian Community."

Friedrich Rittelmeyer (1928)



#### THE BIRTH OF THE CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY

Every year on September 16, many congregations celebrate the founding of the Christian Community. On this day in 1922, the first Act of Consecration of Man was celebrated by Friedrich Rittelmeyer. On the preceding days, he had received the Sacrament of Ordination and subsequently given it to the other founders of this movement for religious renewal. 45 individuals – with Rittelmeyer taking on a central role – offered their strong will and willingness so that the Christian Community could begin its incarnation on Earth. With the spiritual support and counsel of Rudolf Steiner, this "birth" took place nearly 100 years ago.

A great deal needed to happen before this founding could take place. First and foremost, there were the people who, after they had discovered one another, approached Rudolf Steiner with their questions concerning a renewal of Christian religious life. The angelic world must have been very active, too: In June of 1921, Steiner gave a first course to 18 young adults. Only a few weeks later, in the autumn of 1921, he held a series of very intensive lectures, now for 120 people. also giving them the words of the Mass that was later called the Act of Consecration of Man. Many conversations and meetings with individual representatives of the founders' circle followed – with Friedrich Rittelmeyer, Christian Geyer and Emil Bock, but also with Johannes Werner Klein and Gertrud Spörri and others. Something of great magnitude was being prepared in this search for other seekers.

The number of interested people fluctuated as the aim became more and more apparent: not to develop a new theology or reforming ecclesiastical institutions, but to prepare the way for new religious experiences in community. This included a wide array of indications on a community-building form of teaching, a new understanding of the sacraments and, above all, the Being of Christ himself. In the autumn of 1922, the 45 people mentioned above met with Rudolf Steiner at the Goetheanum in Dornach, Switzerland, for intensive courses and preparations prior to the founding.

So much was prepared, achieved, sought for and researched on Earth. But when we look at the founding of the Christian Community, the question arises: Who was actually founding what? The lectures that Rudolf Steiner gave to the future founders, the words of the Act of Consecration, the prayer-meditations, the other sacraments – what is their origin? They originate in the world where Christ, who carries the Godhead and all of the hierarchies in his being, lives and works. In the first third of the 20th century, the heavens were in movement: a new era of human consciousness was dawning, so a new nearness of Christ could be sensed. In traditional theology, this is called the Second Coming of Christ. True to his promise "And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age" (Matthew 28:20), he has always been present, but now he has become more accessible to human consciousness. A renewed religious practice and knowledge (Erkenntnis) is intended to help these soul-forces unfold. The September days leading up to the first celebration of the Act of Consecration in 1922 were experienced as an ongoing Whitsun event.

From the divine world, new rituals were revealed. Rudolf Steiner once described the Christian Community as having been established on spiritual soil by spiritual beings. In this sense, the founding of the Christian Community was a spiritual endowment (Stiftung) received by human beings. Full of grace, the Christ-Being descended into the "word body" of the sacraments that Rudolf Steiner was able to convey.

In order to receive this grace, a spiritual substance was also needed in the souls of those who then became the founders and first priests of the Christian Community. Their devotion to what they received, their deep and reverent will-forces in relation to what was entrusted to them, formed the fundament for the beginning. Since then, worldwide, the Christian Community continues to live and evolve in this dual "birth stream".

Marie-Pierrette Robert



#### RITUALS AND SACRAMENTS

Although the Christian Community is approaching its 100th birthday, it is still at its very beginning. Today, the religious life of many people no longer includes fixed forms and social commitment, so our movement might be seen as a living anachronism. However, the Christian Community does not "oppose" the times, nor is it "behind the times". On the contrary, its current validity and future potential must be discovered – and developed – again and again. The Christian Community recognizes the religious maturity of every person, respects the freedom of belief and each individual's innermost convictions, and trusts that divine revelation and divine presence can take place in every human soul. In this regard, it is very different from many things that have historically developed as "church".

The Christian Community receives its identity from the form and gesture of the sacraments it cultivates. People who want to pray them in community, and who experience inner, sustaining evidence of the Spirit and the divine world, can connect to them. The liturgical life processes of the Christian Community are not arbitrary human inventions, but gifts from the hand of the Risen Christ, who is revealing himself to the Earth and human beings anew. We are invited to live and work with these gifts.

The door to experiencing the rituals' spirituality opens if we are willing to quiet down inwardly, unfold soulspiritual activity out of this quiet – and immerse ourselves in this process again and again. An eminent contemporary once said something which we can

directly apply to the rituals: "Great things do not become tiresome through repetition. Only what is trivial needs variation and must quickly be replaced by something else. What is great becomes greater when we repeat it. And we ourselves become richer in doing so, we become still and become free."

In our often hectic and sensationalist time, the tranquility and "sameness" of the rituals is "provocative" in the positive sense. This ritual life is both stumbling block and cornerstone; it gives the Christian Community its raison d'être. All of the sacraments and rituals serve as nourishment and support on the path to becoming Christian.

Individuals striving for a living relationship to Christ – this is the prerequisite for the Christianity of the community and the healing power of the sacraments, which ultimately are intended to work beyond the sphere of the congregation and extend to all of humanity. Congregational life in the Christian Community flows from rituals that are the same everywhere, but can look different at each location, and address the needs of

the people and our time in very diverse ways. What happens in a given congregation, and what specific shape this takes, depends to a large degree on the people who collaborate in it – on their initiative and their awakeness to the Spirit.

Christward Kröner

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#### **SENDING**

One of the highest mysteries, and one of the most significant challenges, within our Christian Community is the principle of sending. This holy principle (principium = beginning, basis) emanates from the Godhead itself: The Father God sends the Son; the Son sends the Spirit God. This form of spiritual assignment holds sway throughout the heavenly hierarchies: At the turning point of time, "the angel Gabriel was sent from God...to Mary" (Luke 1:26). In 1922, the Christ sent a high angelic being to become the guiding spirit of the Christian Community. And every time a new congregation is founded, the Christ sends a divine being with the assignment to work as the angel of this specific congregation.

Through the ages, human beings have also been included in this mystery principle: The Lord sends Abraham to Canaan (Genesis 12), he sends Moses to Egypt (Exodus 3) and Jonah to Nineveh. And finally John the Baptist is "sent from God" to prepare the mission, the sending, of Christ. When Christ had gathered his disciples around him, he appointed them apostles (meaning "those who are sent forth"): "Just as the Father has sent me forth, I also am sending you" (John 20:21).

This principle was also given to the Christian Community at its foundation. Near the end of the Sacrament of Ordination, our founding Sacrament, the consecrated priest is told that he is sent before his congregations "through the power of Christ". All of the priestly work at our altars draws on the strength of this sacramental sending. However, the Christian Community is the first sacramental community founded on another, new, holy principle: that of human freedom. How can this be reconciled with the original, yet authoritarian, principle of sending? Here lies one of the greatest challenges of our time within religious life:

How can we as modern, autonomous, free human beings still recognize and accept the divine right of sending? We can only do this if we learn to distinguish between two interwoven elements: the priest and the earthly personality (or pastor). Everyone who is to be consecrated, submits a priori to the principle of sending – this is part of becoming a priest. He or she is sent, and wishes to be sent, to serve at the altar of Christ as the representative of a congregation's angel. But at the same time, we need to discern whether personal, family and other circumstances allow for a sending to a specific geographical location. This task becomes clear when we consider that, in contrast to the time of the ancient mysteries, priests today often have partners with professions and/or families with children of school age. The holy principle of freedom applies to all of the individuals involved.

And so, before we pronounce a priest's sending, we as the leadership of the Christian Community always attempt to include everyone who is affected by this decision. We want to see whether a common will can be found: the willingness to move from one congregation to another congregation. If the conversations and deliberations lead to everyone saying "Yes", the priest's sending is decided and pronounced. By beholding and recognizing these two realms of life, the priestly and the personal, it will become ever clearer that the future of the Christian Community flows from two wellsprings: saying yes to being sent by the Christ, and being willing to make loving, personal sacrifices for the life of our congregations.

Vicke von Behr

#### HIERARCHY

It may come as a surprise that the priests in the Christian Community are organized hierarchically. How does that fit with a movement for religious renewal? "Hierarchy" seems a loaded concept, calling up images of old orders in which corresponding social structures there are various spheres of responsimay have still have been appropriate. But the more it emphasized submission - in the sense of a power and status gap – the more it distanced itself from its original form: a social order based on trust and responsibility. Today, organizations in which "bosses have all the say" are at odds with employees who want to participate in leadership.

In the course of human evolution, the development of individuality gives all of us an increasing desire to go through life as autonomous and free beings.

So why is there a hierarchy in the priests' circle, especially since all priests have the same degree of ordination? Why was a hierarchy established at the movement's foundation and seen as a necessary and even forward-looking principle? The hierarchy of the Christian Community was established by the

divine world to protect the rituals and uphold their true form. Only then could the sacraments be given to us.

Every priest belongs to this hierarchy. For the purpose of division of labor, bility. But there are no masters or rulers, only servants:

- > Congregational priests serve the angel of a congregation
- > Lenkers cultivate a consciousness of the angel of a region
- > Lenkers and Oberlenkers in the Circle of Seven want to serve the being of the whole movement

In the spiritual world, all beings pervade one another – so all priests, wherever they may be working, are in fact servants of the Christ himself.

It goes without saying that this attempt at structured responsibility does not always succeed. All too often, old images and ideas still influence all of the people involved. Be it that an old picture of hierarchy is projected onto the leadership, or that the power associated with the position of leadership is used in an outdated way: an abuse of power. Wherever this happens, we are still "behind the times". Future is formed when we are able to perceive the coherent whole and take our place within it, when our "I" learns to experience itself in the "We".

Today, people from many walks of life feel a need and a longing to develop their "I"-competence further. It is crucial to overcome the ego and complement "point consciousness" with a "peripheral consciousness". This developmental step makes us socially competent, able to be in community. A future goal can light up in us, where hierarchy is no longer a foreign counterpart, but a part of our own self. With this in mind, we as the leadership seek to empower and enable, so that, in the full circle of the congregations, Christian Community can arise – in wonderfully diverse ways, ever anew.

Gisela Thriemer



#### TRAINING

The Christian Community can, and wishes to, renew itself again and again – through the people who join it. I experience this strongly every year when a new group of students arrives at the Stuttgart Seminary. They each carry the call to priesthood within themselves, otherwise they would not have come. But each of them must travel their own, individual path to become conscious of this impulse. This is true for each of us, but for the path of priest training it is of particular importance. And as varied as our individual impulses may be, there is a common orientation in what we are seeking.

As we begin searching for our impulses, we go beyond ourselves. On the one hand, this leads us inside, into memory. We can become aware of the fact that we owe our own becoming to other human beings. It is through human relationships, through the loving care of others, that we are able to develop. But we can delve even deeper. Not only our earthly surroundings have encouraged us to become. We have also brought something from the spiritual world along. This is our sending, our mission, which is mentioned in the Sacrament of Baptism. This sending contains our deeper impulses.

On the other hand, looking outwards, we go beyond ourselves by opening up to the challenges of our time. What is it that our contemporaries need, what are the hardships within society, what is to be done? By turning toward our fellow human beings, by relating to the time in which we live, we find our task. The deepest inspiration to go beyond ourselves can be found in our relationship to Christ. He sends us the strength to build relationships. This in turn lets us become aware of our impulses and find our tasks. The paths leading individuals to the Seminary are many and varied, but they are guided by a common experience: From our relationship to the Christ, we draw the strength to become truly human.

Time and again, the Circle of Seven and the Seminary Directors are faced with the challenge: How can we develop the priest training further? Or, put more specifically: How can we further encourage and uncover the relationship to Christ, make it fruitful? In the rituals we celebrate daily, by meeting Christ in the sacrament, this takes place

in a comprehensive way. This encounter is taken further by working on various topics and subjects through which we can become aware of our innermost spiritual impulses. Finally, with a view towards the world, the training helps us develop skills with which we can serve our fellow human beings, and our time. The overarching aim is that we become able to build relationships, able to love. In the end, the path going inward and the path going outward are one path – the priestly path, one that strives to lead the spiritual into the earthly. One could also put it the opposite way: The challenges of our time can only be mastered with strength drawn from the spiritual world.

Each of us has the potential for relationship – whether we are working as priest at the altar or realizing our priesthood in other tasks. The central question of the priest training addresses our becoming; it fosters the priestly potential within our humanity, through which we become able to work together with the spiritual world. It is a tremendous gift that we in the Christian Community can co-create this developmental perspective. This reveals our willingness for the continuous renewal that can be realized by every human being.

Stephan Meyer

#### MOVEMENT FOR RELIGIOUS RENEWAL

Today, the word "movement" is often used as a synonym for "developmental process". I think that the name of the Christian Community also reflects our aim: We're called "movement for religious renewal"! We could also call ourselves "developmental process for religious renewal".

Where can we find new developmental processes in the Christian Communitv? What does it actually mean to develop myself, and develop the life of a congregation? In human communities, healthy social development takes place through continual metamorphosis as well as through unpredictable "impacts" of the future. True Christ development takes place in leaps and ruptures, as Rudolf Steiner rent, don't forget the always emphasized. The 12-year-old in the temple, the baptism in the Jordan, the resurrection – these are examples of Christ's continuity breaks and developmental leaps. In the life of the disciples, we

see the same phenomenon: the raising of Lazarus, the appointment of Peter, the conversion of Saul on the road to Damascus these and other events radically changed their life and work.

Rudolf Steiner saw the idea of the Trinity, rightly understood, as the spiritual foundation of the threefold social order.

With this in mind, the three Baptismal processes could give us a new, practical approach to renewing the "organism" of a congregation.

The water process: Becoming permeated with the spirit of the congregation. This leads to an invitation: Open yourself, become transpaangels!

The salt process: Preserving and forming in the soul of the congregation. This leads to an inner call: Co-create with others, form a shared

center, don't forget those who have died!

The ash process: Renewal through burning in the life of the congregation. Out of this, a new will forms: Learn to catch fire yourself, change your life. heal the wounds!

"You are the body of Christ!" > How can we give the - Paul, who had encountered the returning Christ on the road to Damascus. could still say this to the congregation. Today, he might have to speak differently and say: "Come together to form a new social ether, develop a religious inner space for his return! Become the etheric body of Christ!" As the Christian Community approaches its 100th birthday, are we about to take a new leap in development? How can we renew the Christian Community etherically, through the spirit, again and again? Is our first step let go what has become too hardened and to open ourselves to the new?

Development comes about when we learn. And learning thrives on questions; it unfolds when we practice. So, through questioning, we could embark on learning together, taking the return of Christ as our starting point:

- Christian Community a social form within which the returning Christ could work, as in his etheric body?
- > How much organization, structure and instituton can the etheric Christ tolerate?
- > How do I draw near to the etheric Christ. who is coming towards humanity from the future?

Jaroslaw J.J. Rolka

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#### CHALLENGES IN THE 21ST CENTURY

The 21st century holds many challenges and tasks that demand new, creative approaches and thoughts from us. In Germany, the "word of the year 2016" was *postfaktisch* (post-factual), and on January 22, 2017, the current Counselor to the US President (Kellyanne Conway) used the phrase "alternative facts".

Do we live in a time in which the facts, the truths, no longer count? Do we instead invent alternative facts, or ignore them completely? Has truth become irrelevant? In his bestselling book *On Bullshit*, published in 2005, the American philosopher Harry Frankfurt describes how this has become increasingly common practice in the realm of advertising and public relations. Truth ceases to play a role. Our relationship to truth changes. If we lie, we still care about the truth and try to hide it. But if we're only "bullshitting", we no longer have a relationship to truth – it no longer matters to us.

Because this behavior is not limited to the United States, but seems to be a challenge of our time, we in the Christian Community can take up a challenge: To live with truth and to show a way how people today can interact with the gospels and the sacraments as truthful words. Words spoken by the Being who can say of himself "I am the truth". How can spiritual science help us come to a new understanding of this sphere? How can a meditative approach to the words bring us to the layer of truth?

Another challenge of our time, which can become a task we take up, is our relationship to technology, especially the digital media surrounding us. An increasing number of digital devices are shaping our everyday activities; they have become part of our life. For us, the task might be to first recognize how this world is influencing us. What is it doing to us?

On the physical level, this means perceiving whether, or how, the use of digital media changes us, right down to our sleep patterns. What happens if I spend the two hours before bed immersing myself in the media? Is there a difference if I focus on some words from a book (any one of the scriptures) instead?

On the level of my soul, I can examine whether I need the media (Facebook, WhatsApp, Instagram etc.) in order to feel part of society. Do I use social media to make dates with friends "in real life", or do I more frequently use it as a substitute for meeting up?

On the spiritual level, we can learn to perceive what influence digital media has on our inner life. It is possible, but not easy, to observe how it changes our prayer life and our meditative life. The so-called millennials – people born between approximately 1980 and 2000 – grew up with digital devices. They have never experienced a world without them. In Japan, the fact that young people no longer meet "in real life" has become an affair of state.

Our task, for and with the younger generation, can be to create spaces for true encounters, opportunities for the "I" to meet itself by encountering a "You". "The I, thus understood, that we recognize it in its spirituality as You, that is the Christ." – this is Rudolf Steiner's translation of Peter saying "You are the Christ." (Mark 8:29). Such a meeting between "I" and "You" needs a special space.

Our time has also been called "post-religious". Let's examine the three areas through which we look at the world, try to understand the world, and work in and with the world: art, science, and religion. In our time, religion no longer explains the world or gives us an understanding of it. But up until the so-called modern age, art and science were secondary to religion. All art was sacred art, and science had to serve religion. Today, science predominates; the age of art is still to come.

The task of the Christian Community could be to bring these three realms together in such a way that we learn to see science and religion as linked. How could we, for instance, bring creation and evolution together? Nature and causality? How could we learn to perceive the supersensible by schooling our senses?

These are tasks we can take up, as they seem to be challenges of our times. We do not have the answers yet, but we can search for possible ways to find them.

Anand Mandaiker

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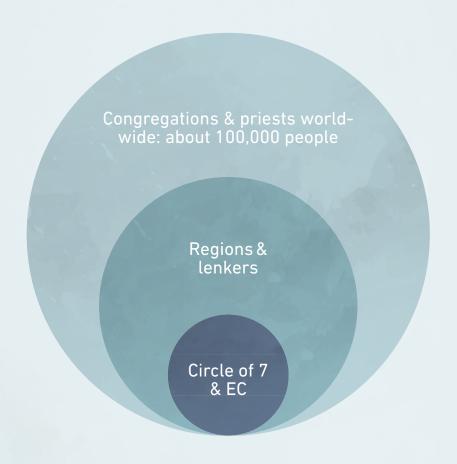
## THE CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY AND ITS SPHERES OF ACTIVITY

"Christianity as such will only survive its most dangerous crisis to date – which it is undergoing currently – if the Christians pull themselves together to raise their consciousness to the concrete reality of supersensible worlds."

Rudolf Frieling (1967)

"The Christian Community is still too new for us! Rudolf Frieling used to say that we should be homesick for the future, that we must throw our anchor out into the future. We have to make the future our own and for that we need to work long and hard with a great deal of patience."

Taco Bay



WORDS FROM PEOPLE WHO ARE LIKE GODPARENTS TO US...

"Time is not pressing, eternity is pressing."

Michael Bauer

"The very noblest word, from human beings all the way up to the seraphim, is now, and ever shall be: serve!"

Christian Morgenstern

"The mortal rumbles in its foundations, but the immortal begins to shine more brightly, and becomes self-aware."

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Novalis

# MY OWN IDEAS AND QUESTIONS INSPIRED BY THE TOPICS IN THIS BROCHURE:

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