

THE CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY IN GREAT BRITAIN AND IRELAND

Newsletter

No. 54—Michaelmas 2018

and Annual Reports of the congregations of The Christian Community in Great Britain 2017-2018

LENKER'S REPORT

I have been much occupied with questions of the future of our movement in the last year. The approaching centenary in 2022 will be a moment to reflect and celebrate what we have achieved. It will also bring questions about the future, of which many of us are already aware. Whilst The Christian Community is independent of the Anthroposophical Society, many people find their way to us through some contact with the anthroposophical movement—whether that be in Camphill, a Steiner school, or other activity. The fact that the institutions that have been the bearers of the work of the movement for the last fifty years or so are in the grip of transitions and in some cases have come to an end, must have an impact on our life and work.

Having said all of that, it seems that no-one starts attending the Act of Consecration without having trodden their own path. I am struck again and again by the stories of those who have found their way into the service: it seems that word of mouth is the most powerful medium. People come to a talk or a service or turn to a priest in a time of difficulty, because a friend tells them about their own experiences. Of course, a lot of sensitivity is needed here. Many of us shrink from the 'missionary' attitudes that live in other churches. Perhaps when we realise that true Christian mission begins with listening rather than telling, we may be relieved from our fear of being inappropriate. Truly listening to the thoughts of the other as if they were our own—this is the key to experiencing the mystery expressed

in the words: 'Where two or three are gathered together in my name, I am in their midst.' Learning to listen in this way might be the key to finding words that will reach people's hearts.

After many years of planning, building work has started in Stroud. The project has evolved considerably over the years, and we feel confident that the church in its final form will provide a wonderful home for the congregation, which will allow it to grow.

We had a number of priests' moves in the last year. Peter Holman joined us from South Africa. He has started work in Edinburgh. Willem Boonstoppel left Forest Row for Aberdeen, and Luke Barr moved to Forest Row from Aberdeen. We hope that these changes will bring new opportunities for them and for their congregations.

When I write these reports I am always struck by the fact that the real news about the last year can't be expressed in the headlines about outer developments. The most important things are the ones that carry on every week, every festival season and all through the year, when priests share the life and work of The Christian Community with members in services, in discussion and study groups, talks and festival celebrations, as well as many other places. This is how the great task of religious renewal that has been entrusted to us can be carried on. I hope that the days we spend together at the Annual Meeting will prove to be an inspiration for our life and work for the coming year. This will take place in Stourbridge from November 9–11.

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<https://tinyurl.com/y74d9hpx>

More details are available in the congregations.

Over a period of a few years we held the Schooling Courses in various congregations. I would be interested to hear from members

who attended these what they meant for them, now that they can look back. I would also be interested to hear what wishes and ideas there might be about such work in the future.

Tom Ravetz

ABERDEEN

Greetings from the Aberdeen Community! We are enjoying a long and unprecedented spell of warm, sunny days at present. Nothing remotely like this has happened to us in aeons, so, naturally, we are making the most of it. But despite this current heat, it has still been a busy and stimulating year for us, with several innovations added to our programme of regular events.

Over the course of the past year, we have examined in detail the entire cycle of seasonal prayers, in which members came together to contemplate and discuss the current prayer. This proved to be an extremely valuable source of help and strength to those who attended. In addition to this, another new study group has become a regular feature, with each member in turn presenting a theme to the group for the purpose of study and/or research. Subjects have included *The Self: Water: Manichaeism: the Offering in the Act of Consecration: etc.*, with the Sacraments being the basis of our study.

Servers' meetings have now been reintroduced, encompassing every aspect of serving at the Altar. Also, meetings with the local Camphill group of Offering Service holders, led by Luke, are now held every two months. These provide an important opportunity for the twelve to eighteen members to meet, discuss and contemplate the various aspects of our shared and similar ritual lives, and to gain inspiration from the experience.

The Crafts Group continues to go from strength to strength. Beginning as a group formed to provide crafts for the annual Camphill Advent Fair, it now meets regularly throughout the entire year, producing craft work for many occasions, for example, the major festivals. We are grateful to Irene Watli for leading these sessions.

One of our members introduced us to the work of the artist, Manfred Ziegler. We hope to hold an exhibition of his little known but interesting work, and perhaps acquire one of

his pictures for the Community Room, at a future date.

Another innovation is the Pre-School Group. On one Sunday in the month, the Community Room in the Church is transformed into a Kindergarten, where the children enjoy a story, pentatonic music and a verse. It is aimed at children aged 1-6, and has been attracting quite a number of parents and children. It is led by Luke, and lasts 15 minutes. The parent-child group continues to meet weekly at the Church, and, serendipitously, is providing a 'feeder' group for the pre-school Sunday event.

The Community in Forres continues to flourish. Numbers are slowly, but steadily increasing.

It is with much regret that we now have to say goodbye to our Priest, Luke Barr. Luke has been a source of much inspiration and stimulation for the congregation. His lively imagination and well stocked mind have provided us with a number of interesting and thought provoking sermons. Also, we greatly appreciate the ingenuity and creativity he has shown in the various study groups which he led. His leaving was marked by a light hearted gathering last Sunday, and a shared lunch, enjoyed by a full company. Please take with you, Luke, our very best wishes for yourself and your family. You will always be in our thoughts!

Maureen Ramsay (Correspondent)

BOTTON

Over the last year our community here in Botton has been growing. A seed has been planted where two communities are being helped along their own paths. This is being aided by our church by what has been done over the year, and we have been using the church building as a base for a rich celebration of the festivals. We have also had a joyful Christening.

As a congregation we are lucky that Siobhan, our visiting priest from Stourbridge, is able to come on a monthly basis. Together we

have explored the seven 'I ams', the meaning of the service, and we have heard about the different world of angels that is among us all.

A gentle warmth is growing amongst us that's good and special.

Ruairidh von Stein

EDINBURGH

Let me begin with our latest event. On St John's Day we welcomed the induction of our new priest, Peter Holman, into our congregation. We had a full house, beautiful weather (which we think Peter and Judy brought from South Africa!) and a lovely celebration in our beautiful garden. Peter must have heard our call for a second priest in Scotland and, after visits with us and elsewhere, accepted the sending here. Judy and Peter are now adjusting to life here and the various challenges this is bringing.

We also welcomed Bill Boyd as a priest emeritus to our congregation. Bill lives in Edinburgh but had not been celebrating as a priest for many years. Being a lively sort, however, he is already offering much to the congregation.

So, from one active priest we now have 2 working priests and 3 priests emeriti.

We now have the possibility to take forward initiatives and relationships that Paul has begun. These include visiting the congregation at Loch Arthur Camphill Community in Dumfries, which has been served for many years from Belfast by Ben van Lieshout, and developing closer ties with the Aberdeen congregation. Contacts have also been established with AnthroTech both in Dumfries and Galloway and on the Isle of Mull where during the year we celebrated the baptisms of five children at Torosay Castle. An (as yet tentative) idea is to see if The Act of Consecration can be celebrated somewhere on Mull.

And what of Glasgow you say?! Well who knows what the future holds....

We are, however, reminded that many people in Glasgow are currently mourning the total loss, through a second fire, of the beloved School of Art building designed by Charles Rennie MacIntosh, and an integral part of the city.

In January Paul took off to Chicago for three months. He sought and received approval from the congregation and Lenkers to

take up a request from the priest there for an exchange visit. So earlier this year the congregation welcomed Ann Burfeind and her partner Florian Scheepens-Burfeind. It proved an immensely successful visit and both were active in raising issues around sexuality and gender, not previously much explored by us, with Florian giving a lecture in our Friday night series and visiting classes in the Steiner school.

Congregational activities have continued amidst all this excitement. We celebrated two more baptisms in Edinburgh in May. In addition, our deliberations around development of house and garden continued with refurbishment of the basement in preparation for our new residents. In January architect and sculptor Johannes Sleundregt presented a model and first draft of plans for building a chapel in the garden and he returns in August when we will explore these ideas further.

Anne Byrne

CAMPBILL MOURNE GRANGE

The Act of Consecration of Man continues to be celebrated fortnightly in Mourne Grange by Rev. Ben van Lieshout, travelling from Holywood, near Belfast. We are fortunate: we regularly manage to fill our beautiful chapel, and members within the community still gladly support by serving, playing music, ironing vestments, and bringing flowers.

Ben gives a talk for the whole community in connection with each festival. We have now re-scheduled these to take place in the afternoon, rather than the evening, to allow for more people to come.

A Gospel study group is offered to villagers every Wednesday evening.

In November, an evening candle-lit Service of Remembrance is held for those, connected to the community, who have died the previous year.

In 2019 we will be hosting the annual Irish Spring Conference in the beginning of March. This will see members from the different congregations in Ireland come together for two days, and Ben will again welcome his colleague from Co. Clare, Ute Konig, as well as our Lenker Rev. Tom Ravetz. We hope to begin preparations for this after the summer.

Karin Shea

SOUTH DEVON

One can be grateful that the past year has been quiet and stable. As we live in such turbulent times, it is a relief to know that we have a home in Devon where we can concentrate on matters of the spirit in a wide range of activities. The two events that stand out in the last year have been the passing on of two highly valued members of our congregation, both in their nineties.

John Salter died at the very end of Epiphany. He had been peacefully in his own bed for several weeks, with kingly nobility, preparing himself consciously for the moment of death. His 96 years were filled with so many deeds of service, first as a soldier in the Second World War, with postings to the Holy Land, Egypt and an area in Italy, not far from Monte Gargano. He valued the great discipline required of a soldier in the fields of war, and he carried over that discipline into his inner spiritual work. Quite early on, his wonderful artistic gifts began to unfold, especially in the area of black and white drawing and sculpture. Metamorphosis was one of his favourite themes. His support of the Christian Community and his many contributions to anthroposophical work were valued very much.

Ursula Schroeder died in May aged 90, a true servant of humanity, who worked selflessly in Camphill homes, especially in Scotland where she also trained as a nurse and became one of the founders of Simeon House. Her other great love in life was music. Despite deafness in one ear from an early age, and gradual loss of hearing in her other one, she remained a fine pianist and lyre player until her active retirement in Devon, together with her dear friend Ardie Thieme.

Other members of the congregation have made regular contributions towards the cultural life of the community, with sharing their own biographies and with talks on a wide range of subjects. These included Raphael and Novalis, John Milton, the three Marys, Matthias Grunewald, Hermann Beckh, Joseph of Arimathea (given by Glyn Lewis, the author of a new book on this remarkable individuality) and the study of the Lord's Prayer, skilfully led by our priest, Sabine Haus. Towards the end of February, we celebrated the 25th anniversary of the consecration of our lovely chapel. It

was a privilege to have the architect, Richard Silverman with us to share some of the deeper aspects of his inspired design.

Our financial status during the whole year has looked quite healthy, as the stabilizing measures that we took last year have borne good fruit and given us a better feeling of security. We are very grateful to our priest Sabine, for the high quality with which the sacraments have been celebrated, and for the great conscientiousness with which she has steered our congregation this last year.

This all gives us the confidence that we can move into the coming years with optimism and full trust in the guiding powers behind our work.

Christopher Cooper

STOURBRIDGE

We have had a most stimulating year. Our two priests, Erhard Keller and Siobhan Porter, have found an excellent working relationship and we have seen their joint energy shining through strongly. Most Sundays we have had interesting talks from them, invited guests and members of the congregation.

Much activity has focussed around the festivals. In Michaelmas 2017 we held a conference when the Rev. Roger Druitt spoke to us about prayer in the context of The Act of Consecration of Man, how it integrates with the Hierarchies and relates to the adversarial powers. Around that time Erhard's talks were about the signs of the zodiac in connection with the sentences in the creed.

Over Christmas and the Holy Nights we had Shepherds' Pageant followed by carols around the tree, craft activities for children and a bring and share meal. On Christmas Day, a festive lunch was organised by Siobhan, and a gratifying number happily shared this time together. The beginning of Epiphany was marked by a performance of 'The Epiphany Witch'.

The Easter Seminar was with Susanne Steffen, 'Exploring the Arthurian and the Grail stream in music', in which a new way of looking at music in the service was approached.

At Ascension we shared a communal breakfast followed by a talk and outing to nearby Clent and St Kenelm's Well where we heard from Erhard about our local saint. As we approached mid summer and St John's tide, we gathered in the beautiful grounds of Ash-

field Gardens for a play written for the season by Karl König, followed by a bring and share meal. And at about this time, Siobhan led a group of parents and children to the summit of Snowden, and succeeded in coming down with the same number as ascended!

Stourbridge has a history of concerts and, after a lull, these continue, now very much boosted by the purchase of a refurbished Danemann grand piano, which replaced the old upright we had.

However, the life of the community is ultimately carried by those people who can associate with us, and so their voices will conclude this report!

"I feel we are more joined up with other Anthroposophical initiatives in Stourbridge through the outreaching of Siobhan and Erhard."

"The idea of having some of the congregation members share their biographies I think was very rewarding."

"I thought the biographies worked well and would like to hear more."

"The talks on the zodiac and the link to the Act of Consecration I found fascinating and has deepened my understanding of the Sacrament."

"I really hope our new piano will lead to more concerts."

"I had no knowledge of our local saint and would be interested in doing the St. Kenelm's pilgrimage with others in the congregation."

"The priests have been a great support to me and to others in the congregation."

"They seem to work so well together, we are fortunate to have such a warm-hearted team."

"After being so stimulated by past seminars I look forward to our next two planned events –at Michaelmas, 'The Twelffold Healing Forces of Michael', and then the annual community conference on Death and Dying."

"There is an exciting growth in the work with children and families, and I look forward to finding new ways of working in this area."

Darshan and Wolfgang live in our church flat with their two children Elma (4) and Charlotte (2).

When asked what The Christian Community means to her, Darshan said: "It is so easy here to do my inner work; there is such a spiritual atmosphere all around the place; it flows

strongly all around; I feel I have made such progress since I lived here and I begin to feel there is hope for me! On a practical level I love the house and the garden, the activities with the children, the services, the constant flow of activity and people with so many different things happening."

Then Elma—probably the youngest person who could be interviewed, said: "I like working with Louise and the other people on Saturday mornings: and I like living here and playing in the garden with my sandpit: and I have learned to sit quietly with someone in The Children's Service and now sometimes I see God in my dreams."

Rosie Phillpot and Paul Randon

STROUD

During the past year the New Church project has moved through several exciting phas-

**Let's Look At Death
From Both Sides Now**

**Annual Meeting of
The Christian Community
at Stourbridge
November 9th – 11th, 2018**

'I'm not afraid of dying—I just don't want to be there when it happens!' (Woody Allan)

For many people today, there is a fear of death, a fear of the unknown and a fear of what might happen to those loved ones left behind.

During this weekend we will explore ways in which we might address these fears, and to move further into what happens to us beyond death.

Main Contributors: *Dr James Dyson* (Anthroposophical Doctor), *Rev. Erhard Keller* (Priest of The Christian Community in Stourbridge), *Rev. Tom Ravetz* (Priest of The Christian Community in Forest Row and Lenker for the British Region), *Kate Spohrer* (Funeral Director), *Andreas Steuck* (Musician and Composer)

Full details, programme and application forms will be available early September.

es, each one a milestone on the long journey towards realisation. In parallel with the finalising of the overall design by the architect and engineers, the New Development Group has met regularly to make decisions on a multitude of essential details regarding the choice of flooring materials, fixtures and fittings, and the colouring of the interior spaces—just to mention a few components that have demanded careful consideration.

By the beginning of January, the project was ready to go out to tender, and by March, four firms had put in their bids. In the end the choice was easy: two were above our budget and one firm withdrew. By Easter it looked like the construction work might be starting in May, but further delays—no doubt testing our patience, pushed the starting date towards July. As I am writing this, we are expecting the contractors to move on site on July 9 with the demolition work of the existing community room, kitchen, office, consultation room and entrance hall finally starting on July 19.

To accommodate these essential spaces during the anticipated one-year construction period, we have recently converted the flat that was previously let out. This has involved much work by members of the community as well as local professionals, all masterminded by Paul Abel.

Several years ago, it was decided to sell the western extremity of our land for the development of flats, and we are now anticipating the Stroud Wayfarers Housing Community Benefit Society to buy this land in order to build five flats, subject to planning permission being approved. The future occupants are all closely connected to our community, which makes us happy.

Peter Ramm (for the Development Group)

It has been a remarkable thing to experience how over this unsettled period of anticipating the builder's arrival and the huge task of having to vacate the existing community spaces, we have maintained our sacramental life and rich cultural programme throughout. The only exception sadly has been to agree to not hold the Spring Fair as the garden was being dug up for drainage.

In the same mood of transition and change we celebrated a wonderful St John's fire and festival in the newly created community

spaces and we used the west end garden for the fire and community supper. Now we have fully moved into the new community room and although it will take a bit of adjustment to the smaller spaces they already feel welcoming and penetrated.

The smoothness of the whole process is largely due to the remarkable forethought and abilities of Paul Abel, who has overseen all of the renovations and preparatory building works with amazing commitment and active engagement. We are extremely fortunate to have him on the team!

Judy Mirkin (for the Carrying Group)

Children's and youth work

We now have 63 signed up children for our annual children's summer camp to be held at Colin Godman's farm near Forest Row for the first time from the 21st–31st July. We are heartened by the good numbers who have applied despite the radical change of venue and are looking forward (all 35 of us in the helper team!) to pioneering the new situation on such a beautiful farm. Details can be found on www.cc-camps.org

Aaron Mirkin

THE COUNCIL OF MANAGEMENT

The Council of Management is the governing body of the legal trustees of The Christian Community in Great Britain (London and the Republic of Ireland each have their own independent trusts).

A recent sudden call on our finances was for help in repairing the crumbling stone-work of Raphael House in Bristol, a building that is rented out, the rent being the main source of income for our Priest Retirement Support Fund.

Together with an ethical developer we are exploring the possibility of getting planning permission to build sustainable homes on the green-belt land we own in Kings Langley. This would make the land much more valuable, and on selling it to this developer, we would go a long way to solving some of our capital problems.

Our main concern in recent months has been the financing of the new church in Stroud. Despite a sizeable funding shortfall we decided last year that there was suffi-

cient enthusiasm, drive and cash to start on this project, and if necessary we would take a loan for the balance in the hope of this being covered by future donations and legacies.

With our reduced resources (emergency repairs in Bristol) and some inevitable increases in costs we were looking for a loan of over a million pounds. Unsurprisingly, but nevertheless severely disappointing, it proved impossible to get a bank loan, despite having assets in the form of many properties. We have, however, had agreement in principle for a loan of this size from a peer-to-peer business lender. At the same time we are looking at various possibilities of reducing the amount of loan we have to take from this to reduce the cost of borrowing. This is still ongoing, and changes from day-to-day.

On a happier note, Simon Couldry has done valiant work in sorting out our administration, and we are now up to date with our accounts.

We are still working on our legal structure (changing to a Charitable Incorporated Organisation), but this is proving to be rather complex as we are trying to avoid starting a totally new charity which might require all congregational bank accounts to be closed and new ones opened.

Finally, we are searching for new trustees, so that we do not come to a situation when many of the existing trustees want to retire at the same time. We have invited two potential trustees to attend our next Council of Management meeting. *Christian Maclean*

INTERNATIONAL REPORT

Twice a year co-ordinators (treasurers for a lenker region) meet to advise on the finances of the international Christian Community. Regional treasurers from most of the European regions attend. Additionally a slightly larger body, together with the lenkers from around the world, meets once a year as the Council, a kind of AGM of the Foundation, the interna-

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tional central financial body of The Christian Community.

In April 2018 the coordinators meeting took place in Southern Germany, visiting congregations around the Lake of Constance. The coordinators do not have any decision-making powers, but their reports and discussions help the international Executive Committee when making decisions about the allocation of funds. Since June 2012 I have been a member of the international Executive Committee.

Christian Maclean

PERSPECTIVES

Perspectives continues to reach people in the UK and around the world, supplementing what people can experience in the congregations and in some cases providing a living link to The Christian Community for people who live further afield. In the last year we made two big changes. We chose to start offering e-Subscriptions, whereby we send a digital copy of the magazine to subscribers via email. It took some soul-searching to make this decision, as we do believe that there is a different quality to reading something that is embodied than reading on the screen. Nevertheless, there has been a good uptake of this offer and it means that many people who could not afford to pay the combined costs of printing and posting the magazine around the world are now able to read it.

The second decision was forced on us when our printers discovered that they had been undercharging us and put up the price by 20%. We were unable to find another printer that could offer us a competitive price without changing the format of the magazine to A5. This brought the unexpected bonus that we can use colour throughout the magazine. It has also reduced our printing and postage costs.

We are always glad to hear about the questions that our readers have. Perhaps there are areas that we haven't covered for a long time that could be revisited; maybe there are things that could be deepened. We would be grateful to hear from you about your questions and concerns, which we would take into our thoughts when we plan the issues for the coming year.

I am grateful to the members of the *Perspectives* team: Christoph Hanni, who does the most work of all, laying out the magazine and managing production; Gabriele Kuhn, who manages the subscriptions; Peter Howe, who is our 'poetry editor' as well as proofreader; Kevin Street, who edits the regional *Newsletter*; Deborah Ravetz, who is responsible for art and choosing the cover pictures, and Donna Simmons, who assists me with copy-editing. Deborah, Peter, Gabriele, Kevin and I meet twice a year to review what we have done and find the themes for the forthcoming issues. I would also like to mention the support of Floris Books, whose regular advertisements cover a large part of our printing costs.

Tom Ravetz

The New Testament For the Christian Community

Living, spirit-filled words . . .

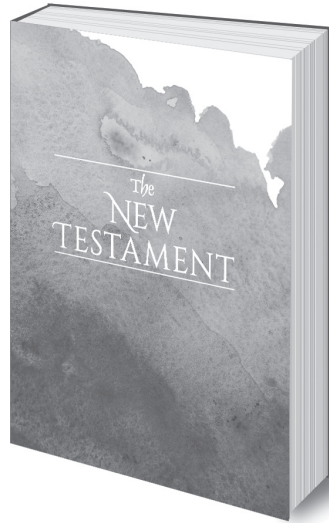
This unique version of the New Testament balances spiritual words with scholarly accuracy.

Madsen draws on other translations, including Emil Bock's seminal German translation, as well as the sacramental language of *The Christian Community*, to present a singular version which uncovers the living wisdom of the Gospels.

Jon Madsen worked as a teacher before he was ordained as a priest of *The Christian Community* in 1977. He worked as a priest in Manchester, Stourbridge and London before retiring in 1996.

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