

THE CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY IN GREAT BRITAIN AND IRELAND

Newsletter

No. 69—Michaelmas 2022

**and Annual Reports of the congregations of
The Christian Community in Great Britain 2021–2022**

LENKER'S LETTER

This year, we will celebrate the centenary of the founding of The Christian Community on 16th September. Our international synod will take place the following week in Dornach, where the foundation took place. There will be an international conference: *LOGOS—Consecrating Humanity*, in Dortmund from 7th–11th October. More details are available via tinyurl.com/CC-Logos22. We are fundraising to support young people who wish to attend. Please contact your local priest for more information, or go to the national website at

thechristiancommunity.co.uk

The centenary of our movement, which comes only a short time before we celebrate one hundred years of work in our region in 1929, is a time to take stock and to think of the future. If I think back to the community that I encountered in the 1980s, some things seemed established and secure which are no longer there. The spread of our congregations was bound up with that of other institutions that were inspired by the work of Rudolf Steiner, particularly the Waldorf Schools and Camphill. This world of institutional Anthroposophy has changed beyond recognition in the last couple of decades. We can feel grateful that the gifts that we received at our founding have enabled us to continue

to work in line with our founding purpose. We can also be grateful for the support of members and friends which has enabled the congregations to survive and thrive.

I sense that the world needs what has been entrusted to us even more deeply; places where true deepening can happen, where we can search for the spirit without dogma; where we can experience the transforming power of Christ. However, it is also true that many people are put off by anything called 'church' or 'Christian'. As we look ahead to the next century, this could be a challenge to our sense of mission. In the time when we could rely on a pool of like-minded people on our doorstep, this was perhaps less pressing. Now, however, we—priests and members alike—may need to develop new skills and find new courage to fulfil the charge that is given to us at Easter: to proclaim Christ as the meaning of the earth. Like any true conversation, this engagement with a wider world would surely begin not with our speaking, but with learning to listen better and better. Then we might find the words that reach our fellow human beings in their concerns and needs.

For the last two years, we have been unable to come together for our annual regional meeting. It was wonderful that we could do this again, in Forest Row from

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<https://wp.me/p5ovPM-2Hd>

10th–12th June with the theme *Creating Sacred Spaces—where present and future meet*. Reports on this event are included in this Newsletter. We noticed in the closing plenum and also in our reflection after the event that this event has become a conference. We intend therefore to refer to it as the Annual Conference of The Christian Community in our Region. We also felt that it was great help that we held it in the summer. We have a provisional date, Ascension weekend (19th–21st May). We have not yet decided on a venue.

We held another successful weekend—as it happened, also in Forest Row—at the end of July with Jonah Evans from the Seminary

in Toronto, on *Living Life as a Priestly Service*. Around fifteen people joined us for a weekend of discernment and deepening of their priestly path in life and at least two of them are living with the question about when they might join the Priests' Training.

In April this year, Liza Lillcrap was introduced to the congregation in Stroud. Liza is British. She has been living for the last years in Australia. She was ordained in 2021, and has been working in Bremen, Germany. Nigel Lumsden, who was ordained in Toronto this year, started his work in London in June. Nigel is British. He spent a number of years teaching in the Steiner School in Hawaii. *Tom Ravetz*

Creating Sacred Spaces—where present and future meet **Reports from the annual community meeting in Forest Row**

Following on from the highly successful Annual Meeting held this year at Forest Row three participants have shared their impressions of the weekend.

A BROAD ARTISTIC CANVAS

I would just like to share, with some wide strokes of my paintbrush, what remained with me after some night's sleep.

And at the first brush stroke is Tom—his attention to detail, his enormous work in the organising and running of the event (especially in the absence of Nataalia) was amazing. He was there when needed. As time went on, he became more and more relaxed as the event itself took him on its wings, enfolding Tom's input.

I noticed over and over again, that the priests are more approachable, more 'primus inter pares', rather than reflecting the old hierarchies from the east. I witnessed during lunch how the 'high priest' conversed with a young lady, and this was the cream on the sacred carrot cake!

Oh, yes, the food—it was tasty, abundant, well presented. Thank you!

All my wishes and questions for the future were covered in the Plenum: The way the words and language of the Act of Consecration were mediated by Rudolf Steiner and are still evolving; a new summertime date for future meetings so that garden and outer space can be used, and still reflecting the community aspect of Whitsun; and the connection between agriculture and Transubstantiation.

Being able to make use of the outer space played into my wish to visit Tablehurst Farm—but—I was able to exercise a bit of moderation, and resisted piling on another experience and instead opted to remain on my own, pondering on things already happening.

And things did happen! The more I tried to pull together my painting, the worse it became. Angela's concise thinking and her one question drew it all together! That was a moment of creation! She tapped in to her sacred space, her experience and aligned

with my then present state, and so I was able to create, too.

Transformation happened in front of my eyes. When the 'young' lady announced she was about to dance a tango, a murmur breezed through the space: Oh no! No! But when she started to dance, the audience, the space and the 78 years 'young' lass was transformed to a joyful, confident, sacred Being. I honestly admit: having been 26+ years in The Christian Community, I do not always grasp the Transubstantiation. Rarely, if at all. Transformation, yes. Palpable, distinct differences before and after the Service. This lady transformed herself as soon as she stepped out to dance, pure poetry.

The power of community pulled me into a renewed sense of balance : after all, I am not so important? Am I? Yet, during small group work and conversations with individuals, I came to realize, yes! I am important enough to be there.

So, one dilemma solved, and then a new question arises. If one person said, the event happened as B, and the other person says, no, it happened like C—then where is the truth? Having been living with these questions for years, facing them anew now, I stand at certain peace. Maybe, just maybe, love and concern are more important now, being inevitably closer to death, than trying to determine 'Whose is the truth?'

Finally the last brush stroke, and one of my most precious images to hold on to, is Tom with a wide broom, sweeping the foyer at 8.20 am. There was such light, care, and joy in the deed that I stood and drunk in the image. No preaching. Not just preaching—but doing. Creating a sacred, clean space. *Avie Bittermann, Hungary*

A SPIRITUAL HOMECOMING

On a glorious, flaming June weekend, just over fifty pilgrims made their way to a sacred space in the depths of the Sussex countryside, the Christian Community church in

Forest Row. We came to celebrate the centenary of the founding of the Movement for Religious Renewal which has called to each of us as a spiritual homecoming.

Vicke von Behr, who is the Erzoberlenker emeritus, gave the opening talk on the Friday evening. He looked back to the inception of the Christian Community when Friedrich Rittelmeyer asked Rudolf Steiner where he had found the text for the Act of Consecration of Man. Steiner replied: 'One has to go to a place where the German language is taught in a mantric way'. It was not therefore the combined work of the first priests but a gift received by Steiner from the divine world to humanity. It is this sacred mantra which we can live into, one whose meaning offers a lifelong exploration. With this new impulse we are no longer subject to the hierarchical authority of the traditional church, but are called upon to be kings, queens and priests ourselves—'Let US worthily fulfill...! We take on the mantle of responsibility for knowing Christ ' in freedom', to keep awake and to keep our individual and collective spiritual life fresh and alive. I shy away from the idea of a 'task' (such a tiring word) and prefer to interpret Vicke's talk as further encouragement for what we are already doing, that is, celebrating the sacraments, marking the festivals, and perhaps most of all, cultivating deep attentiveness and awareness of present reality. Steiner predicted the technological revolution so this digital age, a further descent into the material world is but an evolutionary stage, not to be feared but certainly to be awake to and managed. A story illustrated the point: a farmer struggled a great deal with having to work with big mechanical farming equipment as he realised that Ahriman was very present in them. He found a way of coping with this through creating his own injunction: 'Ahriman, spann an!', meaning 'Giddy up, Ahriman!', as if he were putting Ahriman to work as one of the horses, in other words

taking the reins himself and being the one in control, not leaving Ahriman to be the master of the machine.

I was not alone in being mesmerised by the delicate tracery of Vicke's hand gestures which accompanied all his speaking.

Other observations and experiences

In the rarefied air of anthroposophy it is sometimes the case that one can feel disdainful of and superior to members of churches other than The Christian Community. It was therefore very pleasing to me in our conversation group to hear Siobhán Porter, a priest, counter this tendency and express her appreciation of such fellow clergy and acknowledge the qualities and good things done elsewhere. Vicke emphasised the utmost importance in The Christian Community of the spiritual stream, expressed in his describing of the vertical axis. It is this dimension which nourishes us so deeply, I believe.

On Saturday evening there was a mixed bouquet of artistic offerings ...from a Japanese fairy story through to Schönberg, Rumi, a dramatised synopsis of the Easter Story to the tango. Yes, I did say 'tango'—complete with brilliant ad hoc improvisation from Christian Lillicrap on the piano and Jan Joris Boon on the cello. Linda and John demonstrated the moves. Samuel Fisher's breath-taking talent as a spoken word performance artist took us on two journeys. With his fluency, acting and rap rhythms I am quite sure he would act as a magnet to The Christian Community of a cohort of the younger generation. YouTube, Sam?

Some lasting images

The purposeful tread and procession of the priests in and out of the Act of Consecration was an unexpectedly moving sight for many of us. The long lineage of desert mothers and fathers came to my mind. I thought ' Oh, these are OUR priests'.

The Christian Community

Kevin brought the metaphor (borrowed from a recent sermon given by Nigel Lumsden) for our congregational life of a fire into which individual sticks are placed; they blaze whilst in the fire but the flame of the stick dies when it is removed. Keep the church vibrant therefore!

Every time I go out, I now notice little yellow flowers in the cracks of the pavement and am reminded of Nigel's beautifully simple picture of the dandelions pushing up in an unlikely place. Eventually the wind will come and carry their seeds far and wide.

A special mention must be made to the sustained and tireless nurturing and support to us all by a team of helpers behind the scenes catering and providing the delicious food, beautifully presented each time. Oh! And the clearing up ... the pile of dishes on Saturday night!

Finally, who could forget the vision of Richard Evans in the final plenum brandishing a tall nettle branch by way of an entree into the story of his own 'grasping the nettle'. It was nail biting. In the 1950's, the Iron Curtain era, he travelled to the Soviet Union to secretly deliver a few bibles and anthroposophical literature into the hands of a priest. This illegal activity put them both at considerable risk and must at times have been terrifying. As we could see, he returned unscathed to tell the tale and to encourage us to take courage when an opportunity arrives to spread the word.

It was lovely to meet up with old acquaintances and to make new ones. The days were beautifully balanced with a sense of unhurried spaciousness allowing for a breathing and a being fully present.

Lee Whitaker, Brighton

A FUTURE HARVEST

I really enjoyed meeting so many special people whose hearts were so open to come together. I felt a common genuine search for a call, an answer, a direction to the meaning and substance of our involvement with

The Christian Community. My conversations were rich, warm and deep, a real gift of exchanged time and space. I was also inspired by what I witnessed of the strength and devotion of so many members.

So, what destiny has really brought us together? What balm soothed our souls? What are the individual tasks called upon?

Surely, we all want to harvest the fruits of the meeting....

In sharing what I harvested I think it's important that I place these fruits in the context of my biography.

Here we go...

I am Brazilian and I first encountered Anthroposophy 13 years ago, which led my children to have a Waldorf education, and until two years ago I had an active role as a Waldorf foreign language teacher in partnership with my local community. My Creative English course was offered to local people as well as the children of Cecilia Meirelles Waldorf School.

Since having moved to Buckfastleigh last September 2020, with my children finishing their studies at the South Devon Steiner School, I have become involved with my Christian Community as a member, serving on the committee, and as a cleaner in helping to take care of its physical body. At the same time, I am a member of our Devon Anthroposophical Group.

You see, I became 'whole', in that I 'woke up' having this deeper call to unite what was living Anthroposophy in me to the Mystery of Golgotha, which becomes symbolized every time I live in the Act of Consecration of Man. The first time I set foot inside our chapel I could not fully comprehend certain 'coincidences', for example, the colours of the altar and surrounding walls were exactly the same colours of my house in Brazil. I really felt at home! Yet, a sort of metamorphosis took place -something shifted from what lived on the outside walls of the wider world to a centred, focused sacred space. Gently I am slowly

coming to understand the rhythms, the words of the sacrament but mostly this feeling of the Mystery, of the presence of the Christ being in us, and among us. It seems only natural and meaningful to continue studying Anthroposophy and engage in various groups with a vivid interest in the Anthroposophical Society.

This annual meeting fulfilled its aim since, on the one hand, the moods and tones of our talks and artistic activities were indeed coloured and underpinned by what resonated inside us from the Act of Consecration. That's how I experienced myself and the insightful encounters I had.

On the other hand, there were pertinent questions that arose in me concerning the destiny of The Christian Community. We were asked to become individual 'priests' and 'kings', who create and tenderly care for sacred spaces whilst taking on the task of spreading to the world the spirit of The Christian Community.

However, if the spirit is always free to cross worldly boundaries, what has historically prevented cross fertilization of The Christian Community and the Anthroposophical movement with its various cultural impulses?

If Michael is the same archangel who guides the First Class and The Christian Community in our karmic human spiritual development, why can there at times seem to be an abyss separating members?

Isn't aiming to live with Christ precisely the love substance of the Dodecahedron Foundation Stone, laid in our individual hearts and the heart of the Anthroposophical Society?

Am I too naïve to imagine what potentially could unite us in times when such adversarial forces are so active?

Am I now courageous enough to open my heart to meet my Guardian Angel and to contemplate where I came from, from what culture, and to where I am going and who is walking with me?

Do I really comprehend the dimension of Christ's sacrifice as an Act of Love to intercept my karma, my destiny?

The Coronavirus has not simply shaken world order but put to test the very foundations of our Christian faith. If incarnation is the spirit into matter, and soul is the dwelling for the eternal spirit, has the scientific omission of spirit succeeded in dehumanising our souls? I am really sorry to oversimplify such complex debate over the Corona-virus but I also believe these questions need to be overtly addressed in a compassionate manner if we are to gaze into the future and meet what's coming towards us, alerted by issues raised by Covid. Could

we nurture in us the healing and compassionate love forces of Saint Francis to counter cultural streams of social distancing and isolation? What difference does it make if the name of the illness is leprosy or Covid when our soul forces are weakened?

Everything I have written arose from conversations and fruitful thinking from our meeting together. In the light and warmth of my questions I hope others feel eager to imagine and create a vision, one that we can read the signs of the times, and respond to see the 'whole' and so become 'whole'.

*Maria Helena Correa da Silva
Buckfastleigh*

COMINGS AND GOINGS

Continuing the introductions of priests new to this region, Liza Lillicrap shares something of her path to ordination—and beyond.

I was born in Bradford-on-Avon in Wiltshire and went on a long, long journey before finally arriving at my induction in Stroud on Palm Sunday this year. I sense that Palm Sunday is a good day to celebrate an induction into a congregation, after all it is a day of arrival when there is something to celebrate!

I'll share a potted version of what came before Palm Sunday. I lived and went to school in Wiltshire and Dorset, then I studied German (yes, I was fascinated by Kafka) and Music at London University. Before studying I lived in Germany for a year, and then for a further year as part of my university course, but I am born and bred English. After marrying I lived with my husband in Iceland for two years teaching music. We then returned to Devon where we lived for ten years, and our two children came into the world, before moving to Sydney, Australia.

Many years ago my journey towards Stroud started when the question arose in

me as to whether an essential attribute of being a priest in The Christian Community is that one had the capacity to receive a doctorate, as Ann Klemm had, who was the first priest I really got to know. For some twenty years the answer to that question had been a resounding 'yes' as I only met priests with well-honed intellects. But then I met a woman who told me that Ann herself had frequently voiced that this intellectual approach to priesthood was not the only way forward and that the heart forces must also play a part in the direction of the future. Suddenly the door to my calling had been opened and it was possible to view certain events in my life as 'good for a priest in training'. I felt emboldened to join the proseminar training in Sydney, in which I participated whilst working full time as a German teacher in one of the Steiner schools there.

So, having lived in Sydney for twenty years we moved to Hamburg where I completed the Preparation Course and the Ordination Course at the seminary. I was ordained in Berlin-Wilmersdorf in February 2021 at which, in the middle of lockdown, miraculously about 100 priests were able

to come together, all sitting well distanced from each other, accepting me to join them in this valuable work.

My first sending was to St Michael's, Bremen in Germany where I worked for a year. The church stands in the middle of the city and the heavy doors to the church have impressive brass work depicting St Michael; these doors require strong arms to open them, and remind one on stepping into the church, that the work of a 'Michaelite', a follower of Michael, is not work that can be taken lightly.

In Bremen I experienced life of a well-established congregation with two colleagues and three retired colleagues. I experienced the rich German culture and took great joy in meeting the people of the congregation both in the church and visiting them in their homes. As I took my first



Liza Lillicrap

steps in the precious work, meeting everything for the first time, I was supported by my colleagues and again and again felt that it was I who was being honoured to be able to do this work and enter new relationships, as people entrusted the deep treasures of their souls to my care. I was particularly honoured to celebrate a diamond wedding.

Returning to England, the country of my birth, and now being able to

walk through the glorious Gloucestershire landscapes, fields, valleys and woodlands, breathing in the leafy greens and golden sunlight, it really feels like I am returning, to quote William Blake's *Jerusalem*, to the 'green and pleasant land' where I will 'not let the sword sleep in my hand' as I set out, as one of the priesthood (of all!), on the path in the second century of The Christian Community.

Liza Lillicrap

REPORTS OF THE CONGREGATIONS 2021–2022

The following are the reports received so far from the Congregations

DEVON

The highlights of the year began last August with the marriage between Denise and Alasdair Jones Gordon at their new home of Whites Farm just outside Buckfastleigh. The chapel was full of their guests from afar as well as members of the local community for the Act of Consecration of Man beforehand, and the celebrations afterwards included many more into the evening with the sharing of a variety of music. Whites Farm is hosting many initiatives including education, biodynamic growing and conferences

and we enjoyed this year's St John's festival there with a big fire.

During Michaelmas time our new sculpture of Michael was ready to be installed and the artist Antoinette Jackson spoke to us about the process of creating this after conversations and sharing drawings and models with Sabine. We are grateful to live with this new image of Michael.

During December two boys attending the service for the children were baptised and it was a joy to see four members of the congregation becoming godparents.

In May this year Rev Tom Ravetz came to take the Confirmation of Ylla Parker and Merlin Hills. Now we have fewer children

attending the services we can hope for more to join us on a regular basis since we had 13 attending on Easter Sunday.

We received three new members into The Christian Community: Maria Helena Correa Da Silva in October, Wendy Elizabeth Cook in November and Emily Victoria Young in December.

Our events included festival celebrations, of which the Three Kings Play of Baboushka, adapted by Carole Hills, was warmly received and participated in by all the children, alongside the sharing of biographies, studies of the Lord's Prayer and Seasonal Prayers, as well as gospel studies after the Wednesday services. Rory Valentine continues to share his insights on Raphael when showing us some of his pictures in detail projected onto our pull-down screen. This was also used for showing us Greg Tricker's work when the artist came to talk about his



Snapshot from Devon

The Christian Community

journey and Christopher Cooper's illustrated talk on Gerard Wagner.

The choir rehearses weekly under the leadership of Oliver Mason and delights us during the seasons with concerts, which are well attended and bring in valuable donations.

We loved seeing guests joining us from other communities like Stroud and Stourbridge as well as our members from Cornwall for the Easter brunch and other occasions as well as for holidaying using our guest rooms as their base.

Devon is a wonderful place for a replenishing holiday with the beauty and peace of Dartmoor as well as the beaches and the South West Coast Path for walking. Guided walks can be arranged for a donation. In addition Dartington Estate offers a wide range of cultural events.

We look forward to seeing you here in the future and to continue bringing the healing substance of the sacraments into the world.

Rev Sabine Haus

FOREST ROW

We were delighted to welcome Nataliia Shatna in September, 2021. Her arrival coincided with the beginning of Selina's maternity leave and we were equally delighted to accompany Selina on her journey into this new phase of her life and priestly work. Selina will be making a gradual return to work from September. This is timely, as my capacity to take over most of what she would be doing is diminishing now that travel is becoming easier again.

As in the other congregations, 2022 marked the return to something like normal life, with Covid restrictions falling away. It has been important still to talk about the situation of those whose health means that they need to be particularly careful, and we have kept one of our weekday services with open windows until the time of writing.

Some highlights of the programme have been the Michaelmas Conference

on *Throwing off the Fetters of Fear—Finding Freedom in Troubled Times*; some truly wonderful concerts; the continually changing exhibitions in our community room; our Holy Nights and Holy Week workshops, along with an innovative interweaving of the seven words from the cross with Shostakovich's String Quartet No 15, performed by the Hess Ensemble.

Our programme for the children has taken shape again, with fortnightly Children's Services, the Little Ones' Gatherings for preschool children, festivals to mark the moments of the year, and the ever-popular Skylarks Group, which offers religious instruction in an informal setting. We are delighted that one of our members will be starting weekly groups for parents and babies, and another group for parents and toddlers in our Children's Room. We have missed the infusion of life that comes from having young children in our building!

Here are the thoughts of one of our members, Rosanne White, on our Whitsunday Act of Consecration of Man:

While our thoughts are so much with the country and people of the Ukraine during this war for their autonomy, it was a particular joy to be able to hear the Act of Consecration of Man in the Ukrainian language. It took place on Whitsunday, and was possible because one of our priests, Nataliia Shatna, is from the Ukraine.

I felt deeply moved hearing this Slav-ic language for the first time, and one of our servers had learnt to speak all the responses in that language.

The event felt to me like the possibility had arisen for a wave of love and spiritual substance to be sent from our country to the Ukraine. I felt deep gratitude for the creation of that moment. Perhaps at some suitable opportunity it could be repeated?

Nataliia visits Canterbury monthly and Tom visits Ringwood eight times a year.

Tom Ravetz (for Nataliia and Selina)

STOURBRIDGE

In Stourbridge the past three months have been unprecedented in my experience as during that time we have, with six funerals, celebrated the lives of six long-time members of our community. Just after Easter Barbara Foster led the way as she has so many times during her lifetime especially giving birth to Ruskin Mill; then on Whitsunday Anita Large, who we will remember for her faithfulness to the services, study groups and especially recently for her beautiful seasonal tables in the church foyer, followed. Marieke Makin, formerly Rita Boyd, will be remembered as one of the leading lights in the development of Park Attwood Clinic as well as for the fact that she had been the wife of the second priest in Stourbridge—Bill Boyd. Julian Gilde was much loved and admired in the congregation and at Elmfield School for his music, interest in everyone he met, his happy smile and most especially for the way he managed to fully live with motor neurone disease for the last three years. Flo Huntley together with her husband Doug moved to Stourbridge ten years ago when she left Camphill in Delrow but she has made an impact with her interest and questioning at every event: and finally John Sumner who had been a regular part of the congregation during the building of the church as well as the maintenance man at Elmfield died in Finedon, Northamptonshire, to which he had retired some years ago but had been visited regularly by Erhard for the past several years.

Otherwise life has continued with its usual rhythm of services, Gospel Study, talks, concerts, and Ascension Day outing to Great Witley Church, twenty languages at the Whitsun festival including the Lord's Prayer in Aramaic, and a small gathering for St John's with a not so small fire! And last but by no means least the work with the children continues, anticipating a camping trip to Snowdon in July;

and it is particularly pleasing to see the congregations of adults and children coming together more and more nurtured by the children's coffee and cake shop which happens frequently after the Sunday Act of Consecration, and which is very much appreciated.

Rosie Philpott

EDINBURGH 100 YEARS OLD

It was on an old Imperial portable typewriter during Michaelmas 1989 that I typed the first inter-congregational newsletter, checked by Michael Jones, copied on a photocopier and posted out, inviting the secretaries of other congregations to respond. Which I was pleased to discover they did! How wonderfully it has developed since then! I was very new to The Christian Community, having only become a member about a year before: my first church membership ever. Thus it was really part of my gaining more of an idea of what I had joined (!).

Moving on rapidly, we come to 2020 and the rigours of the pandemic.

We imagine every congregation will have been through the same shock of closure, their priests celebrating alone (physically but not spiritually), then the lifting of the ban on services as long as all were masked and windows open and no gathering to chat afterwards.

Finally, in our case in Edinburgh, the erection of our marquee outside on the sheltered upper lawn, where we all sat wrapped in small blankets for coffee, conversations and even study groups through the Scottish winter.

The relief when we were allowed indoors again may be imagined.

2022

On July 12 in the evening, we were delighted to welcome several faithful members of our National Council of Trustees for Britain and Ireland to Edinburgh. They had come mainly from the Midlands—Stour-

bridge and Manchester, and our Lenker, Tom Ravetz from Forest Row, from far away East Sussex, had made it in the face of rail strikes, cancelled flights etc. Our Trustees are like Guardian Angels of the Congregations manifest in human form.

Bruce Bennet, our lead on the new church developments here, was able to give the Trustees a good flavour of the seemingly interminable difficulties we have navigated through the deep waters of the Edinburgh Planning Process and its various committees, as well as objections from neighbours concerning conservation of trees, etc.

Many changes have had to be made to both design and materials, particularly for the priest accommodation, as well as building size and location within the garden. Those involved have shown enormous patience and skill during this process.

Despite all our best efforts, we were recently informed that full planning permission has been refused. An appeal is now being lodged and this will be heard on the 14th of September. In the meantime we are seeking support from local Councillors. Watch this space...

We have had great pleasure in welcoming Lucienne van Bergenhenegouwen, one half of the Dutch duo of priests in Aberdeen, once a month for several days at a time. Her enthusiasm and commitment and presentation of talks are warmly appreciated. She even manages to fit in a trip to Fife to take a study group for four Fifers who live north of the Forth.

Matthew Dexter came, saw and conquered us with his one man show of *The Little Prince* near the end of April.

A flying visit from our previous priest Paul Newton, now working in Spring Valley New York State, was mutually heart-warming.

Three young people were confirmed around this time too.

Rather like having fairies at the bottom of the garden, a little group of par-

ents with toddlers visited our timber cabin weekly for cosy crafty doings in the cold months and by May were discovered skipping round their own jolly maypole at the sunny end of said garden.

Bart Lakeman, originally from the Netherlands, former psychiatrist and ex-Camphill, now still anchored in the Aberdeen area, gave us a fascinating view of his researches into Leonardo Da Vinci's painting of The Last Supper with the help of projected images. This in preparation for his book on the subject.

If music be the food of love, there is certainly love in the air when our indigenous musicians who comprise the Polwarth String Quintet give us a concert. Bravo Ladies!

From the Athens of the North which hosts the best International Festival in the Western World, we will give you a taste if the internationalism of our congregation:

- We have just been joined by a lady from Brazil
- Our worthy inter-congregational secretary from Lancashire who arrives in style on her tricycle for adults—even in a Scottish winter! And plucks the strings of a sounding bowl for our service
- A Nigerian who used to live in Edinburgh, and is visiting our congregation again for a few months
- A much-valued flautist from The Netherlands who plays his wood-notes wild for the service from time to time and helps uplift our souls along with the service
- Three men from South Africa:- our priest Peter plus son Johnathan (who is learning Mandarin Chinese—obviously a future-oriented young man) and the third man, Ian, the most helpful chap in central Scotland
- Our super Community Secretary Gabriele from Germany, whom you know about already and is Peter's Right Hand Woman

- From Mauritius our marvellous Rhythmic Massage Therapist who soothes aches and pains in not only the body but our Etheric and Soul selves too
- Lisa and Sean, an American-Scots Alliance, who were married here in December during the Pandemic in winter sunshine
- Hungary is represented by Judit who does curative work in her quietly strong yet sensitive way
- And the rest of us, being a tapestry of local Scots and English immigrants offering piano playing, violin playing, painting and crafting and cake-baking, serving and ironing and gardening.

Linda Muir

ABERDEEN

Greetings from the Aberdeen Community, in this our first post-Covid report. I trust that it is now no more than a distant memory in most people's lives. I am glad to report that all is well, healthwise, here in Aberdeen. (Top marks must be awarded to Camphill, for the sterling work they did in controlling the virus in their campuses, of which we have several in Aberdeen.) Over all, there were very few cases in the congregation as a whole, and there is a general feeling of intellectual awakening, now that the long Summer 'vacation' has come to an end.

This is a much curtailed report, thanks to our friend Covid. This time last year, we were discussing the Michael Epistle, and also looking at the place of the Creed in our lives. We had a hugely entertaining 80th Birthday celebration for William Milne, and then, into the New Year, we discussed the Spiritual Biographies of such figures as Emil Bock, Taco Bay and Adam Bittleston. This year, so far, we have enjoyed an enactment of the Antoine de St Exupery story of The Little Prince, and, in total contrast, a talk on the connection between Molecular Biology and Spiritual Science; the theme

being Genetics and the Free Human Being. Although deeply technical, the speaker had the skill and judgement to couch his talk in language that would not be over the heads of his audience, yet avoiding the mistake of 'talking down' to them as if they were children. This is an important skill for a speaker to possess, and for such a young man to have mastered it, it was quite remarkable. Everyone found it a superlatively planned presentation. Our latest innovation is to have a regular Close of Day service, with a shared supper, and discussion, singing, etc. As this is still in its infancy, it may undergo changes, as time goes on.

Best wishes to all. *Maureen Ramsay*

We have started a once a month Close of Day service on a Thursday evening.

The impulse for this comes from different sources: from the priests who are interested in a more regular Close of Day service and from members of the congre-

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gation who are looking for an event that includes prayer and song, with regard to the times we live in or people who need our attention. We want to create a place where our hearts can speak and listen prayerfully through individual prayer, communal singing and short spaces for contemplative silence.

The 'Our Father' spoken by the priest from the altar at the end rounds off the service.

We had our first Close of Day on Maundy Thursday, then again on Ascension Day and St John's. We meet at 6 pm for a communal supper, perhaps with a Gospel reading and conversation, and for practising the songs we sing during the service.

At 7 pm we go into the chapel for the actual service, which might take up to an hour. One can also attend only the service, as required.

It is a beautiful initiative, which is still evolving. We find it truly nourishing.

Freya van Midden

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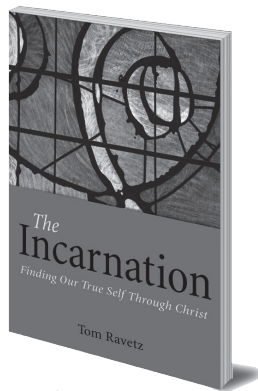
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