

Newsletter

No. 71 — St John's 2023

LENKER'S LETTER

I was sad to miss the Annual Conference but very grateful to Nataliia Shatna for writing such a full report.

We are bidding farewell to Ute König, who has been working in County Clare since 2013. Ute is moving to Stuttgart. Siobhán Porter will leave Stourbridge and take up a new sending to County Clare at the end of July. *Tom Ravetz*

REPORT FROM THE ANNUAL COMMUNITY MEETING

Dear Members and Friends, dear supporters of The Christian Community in Great Britain and Northern Ireland,

We have just had the Annual Conference in Stourbridge, "A Sower Went out to Sow the Seed. Seeds for Renewal", where members and priests came together for the weekend. They travelled from far and wide, from Aberdeen, Devon, Canterbury, Stroud, Pembrokeshire, Forest Row, Bristol and of course Stourbridge. Beautiful Ascension sunshine welcomed all the participants and kept on warming their hearts throughout the conference days. A large white marquee was pitched in front of the church with the banner: "Welcome to Christian Community Annual Conference. Movement for Religious Renewal". As you passed by on the street, you could hear talking, buzzing and laughing coming from the marquee, a lively atmosphere.

Rosie looked after our welfare, wearing her beautiful apron adorned with foxes, and kept our bodies and souls nourished

in many ways, one of which was providing delicious food. "Healthy body—healthy soul", old but yet very modern wisdom. Kevin was the second pillar of the conference, welcoming everyone at check-in, guiding us through the programme, encouraging us to participate in the creative Saturday evening, and managing the participants with a kind heart and humour.

Bernardus filled the soul of our conference singing with us, as well as clay modelling on Saturday afternoon, a great experience in opening ourselves to the seeds... Everyone received a piece of clay with a drop of lavender oil and then the task was to form a ball, after which we could exchange them with our neighbours. How different balls of clay can be: cold or warm or soft. After experiencing these differences, we received our balls back and the next task was to work on them and create space for the seeds—ideas, potential, something we would like to do, but maybe haven't, or something unknown that wants to come and wants to be revealed. We had to push the clay in on place and make space for something new. And thus we carried on working, "trusting our hands" as Bernardus said, "trust your hands, they know what to do. Don't think but trust". In the end we all looked at what has become, what was created, pieces of art were placed in the middle of each table and looked at, observed. They had to be in a conversation, so we had to place them in such a way they could communicate, connect to each other and

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be open to the world. The last task was to take somebody else's piece of art and say in one word or in a sentence, what spoke to me, why I have chosen what I have chosen. In such a way we could see a piece of art with somebody else's eyes, appreciate something that was revealed to me through the other person. Making space for something new to come, something we don't yet know about—and then be surprised and full of wonder with what was created. This was such a great opportunity to come into our will, into our hands—the most creative part of the human being.

On Saturday morning and afternoon we had conversation/work groups. The whole conference was embraced by the Close of Day services as well as The Act of Consecration of Man. Sadly we missed our Lenker, Tom Ravetz, during the conference due to illness.

Meeting and coming together in such a conference gives us trust and courage for the future. Just from these two days we could see that we have something to share, something to give to each other and to the world, even if they are seeds, ideas to begin with, but they have to come into the world. Seeds of human warmth, openness, wisdom, humour, life forces. And it's great to share them with as many people as possible, with the environment, in order to multiply them, as our prayers are multiplied when we pray together and send where they are needed most. It's a great opportunity to appreciate others in their searching, striving, in their questions and doubts, and in supporting them. Coming together during Ascensiontide was a real blessing from above, as we hear in our Ascension Epistle. We hear that Christ is blessing us, the whole earth from above, from the heavenly realm. And we felt and experienced this reality in gathering together in front of the altar, in our conversation groups, in meeting each other, in singing and

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creating together. He was weaving and sowing seeds of heart-felt warmth, openness and joy of human encounter between us during these Ascension days, the seeds which sustain the future.

With many thanks to Rosie, Philippa, Kevin, Siobhan, Erhard and everyone who helped with organising this conference!

Nataliia Shatna, Priest of The Christian Community in Forest Row

A PLENUM SOWING — SEEDS FROM THE CLOSING SESSION OF THE ANNUAL COMMUNITY CONFERENCE

We have to rely on the wisdom of the individual, not being directed from outside as to how they should think and act.

The church is a haven.

Awake to Community.

What do parents actually want from religion lessons?

Nathaniel, Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathea all were willing to work on themselves, work that is never finished for them—and for us.

How do the qualities of music reflect our specific regions? Is Celtic Northumberland the same as what is experienced in London?

We must be open to exploration.

A rich scattering of seeds—and now, which ones will take root?

Kevin Street, Stourbridge

Golden Chalice

Gold on the Chasuble

Golden Sun

Golden Eggs

*May the seeds that have been sown
in the chalice of our hearts
in these golden days grow and ripen
through wonder, kindness, interest
and love into thriving, fruitful growth
for the future.*

Bridget, Canterbury