

THE CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY IN GREAT BRITAIN AND IRELAND

Newsletter

No. 66—Michaelmas 2021

and Annual Reports of the congregations of The Christian Community in Great Britain 2020–2021

LENKER'S LETTER

In many conversations with colleagues and members, it has been striking that for many of us these last months have been a time of deepening. In regard to the Act of Consecration of Man, this may have come about through needing to stay away, but noticing that it was possible to take part from afar; it may have come about through experiencing the reality of the communion even when we were not coming forward to receive it; it may have been too as we noticed how sorely the world needed the values that we live by when we celebrate together. This September marks 99 years since the founding of The Christian Community in a world that was going through social and political upheaval. It is good to feel that the relevance and vitality of our task have not diminished over the last 99 years!

Following discussion in the Synod, we took the decision not to plan an Annual Meeting this year due to the uncertain situation regarding travel and accommodation. After a two-year gap, we hope to be able to meet again next year, the centenary year of the foundation of The Christian Community. In a region such as ours, where most congregations are relatively far apart, it can be a challenge to extend our awareness to the whole Region. Nevertheless, our Annual Meetings have often given rise to rewarding and deepening experiences. It would be good to hear

what hopes and wishes members might have of these meetings. If you have suggestions and questions about the Annual Meeting, please let your local priest know, or get in touch with me directly.

We will be welcoming Nataliia Shatna to the Region in September. Nataliia was born in Ukraine. She was ordained in March this year. She will replace Luke Barr in Forest Row, where Selina Horn will start her maternity leave in September. Paul Corman will be helping out in Stroud for the first part of the autumn, whilst we continue to look for a second priest for Stroud.

Progress on our translation work has been carrying on rather more slowly than we hoped, due to the extraordinary circumstances we have been in. Following discussion in the Synod, we now have a version that replaces Thee and Thy with You and Your, which we expect to sign off at our synod in the autumn. We are expecting to adopt this version in Advent. We have left one question open to live with over the summer, namely the opening words of the Lord's Prayer. We are living with three possible translations, and we decided to sound out our members about these possibilities. We are not intending to put this to the vote, but to inform our discussions at the Synod in October with the feelings and insights of the members.

With best wishes for a fruitful Autumn,

Tom Ravetz

If you need more copies of this Newsletter, please print from this link, or read online.

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

REPORTS OF THE CONGREGATIONS 2020–2021

DEVON

In the early autumn last year when life seemed to be returning to some normality, one could not have foreseen the many months of lockdown that lay ahead. Fortunately the services in the church did not stop at any point and could be attended, although there was no shared out communion between January and Easter-Saturday.

It was a special moment on Easter Sunday when the bread and cup were offered again, albeit with people standing apart at the altar steps. Not everyone in the community felt ready for this step, but respected the choice that was now available.

Seating throughout this year was clearly designated and each person intending to come to the service had to book in advance. This did not affect the mood of reverence which belongs to the celebration of the ritual. People accepted that talks and study groups could not take place after the services for many months, but when they returned they were very much welcomed.

During the year there have been two funerals: Fiona von Heider's in October and Colin Tanser's in June. Sally Maya's funeral is planned for August 5.

It was heartening to see that Confirmations could still take place: Laila Romoli Mcllwaine was confirmed at Michaelmas by our local priest Sabine with permission from the lenker and Jude Young from Devon joined the Stroud Confirmation on the Saturday after Easter.

We welcomed new families and children for the services and festivals, of which the Easter celebration was a highlight. New members have also joined to carry the areas of responsibility.

We received further government grants as compensation for our loss of income due to the covid restrictions, which also affected our guest-rooms and room rentals. We qualified for this due to paying business rates on our premises, albeit at a reduced rate. This -as well as continued regular contributions and one-off gifts- has stabilised our community's finances



caption

and helped us pay for a new boiler system as well as other essential maintenance.

We trust that the days of lockdown have passed and that many valuable aspects of our community's varied life will establish themselves fully again. *Christopher Cooper*

FOREST ROW

In September 2021 the congregation welcomed the arrival of Rev. Selina Horn and said an unexpected farewell to Rev. Luke Barr in November, who took up a new posting to Hamburg, together with his wife and four sons.

Tom Ravetz and Selina Horn worked together through the journey of Covid restrictions and lockdown. The church managed to have outdoor carol singing at Christmas, many baptisms in Easter and weekly evening services for the nine Confirmation children and their parents. An online 'Poetry Cafe' gave literary nourishment once a week, as well as weekly discussion groups. A children's religion group was able to start where Selina introduced a new saint each week by hiding the letters of their name in the church garden for the children to find. 'Family Services' were introduced to enable families and children to come to the church when the Children's Service was not possible to hold and they held the theme of the significant life of Saint Francis.

A rich and full Holy Week of morning and evening services was well attended and enjoyed. Fortnightly evening services throughout the year have had sermon themes such as "Crisis as opportunity", "Healing and the Sickness of sin", "Believing is Seeing" and "The Stones we Throw".

We hosted an online conference on "What makes us whole?" with Dr. Michaela Glöckler as guest speaker. There were more than 200 participants, with many joining from India and other countries.

The transcripts of the talks are available through our newsletter.

The weekly newsletters with their gospel contemplations, photos, news and other information, have received many letters of appreciation and given rise to new donations. These can be sent to anyone who would like to receive them and many of the 320 subscribers are from other areas of the UK and other countries. Please contact the church if you would like to subscribe.

In September we are looking forward to welcoming a new priest in the UK, Rev. Nataliia Shatna and Selina will be going on maternity leave for some time before she returns to work alongside Nataliia next year.

Selina Horn

BRISTOL

Let me state right at the beginning that we have much to be grateful for: the ongoing support from a priest in Stroud (we are a visited congregation) which has been seamless, from Carmel to Selina, and, for the time being, back to Carmel again; having a flat upstairs to let is a 'life-saver', as we couldn't exist without that income, at least not in the present way; having a supportive and engaged congregation. We are a small 'outfit' (why so small in a big city, you may wonder?), with between 10–15 regular attendees. Beyond this closer group, there is a wider circle of support and appreciation which makes a big difference and helps our wider integration. And here's another aspect of gratitude: the fact that The Christian Community 'operates' in freedom; this could easily be overlooked.

Like many groups/congregations, we have been affected by the Covid Regulations. When there were no physical services, the sermons/meditative epistles sent out by the priest regularly were a wonder-

ful help; individual members experienced a great strength in joining with services—from home—at the usual times. Once back in the chapel/ community spaces, we were able to discuss freely how best to manage. And, as far as we know, nobody in the congregation has been adversely affected by Covid. It was much more difficult around members in care-homes, as visiting was so restricted or even impossible. And we are an ageing bunch! Luckily, we were able to support as well as was possible, and in one case, became instrumental with the transfer from flat to hospital to intermediate care-home, back to the flat, to hospital and, finally, a permanent care-home.

So—what lives in our congregation, you will ask? The conversations after the Act of Consecration are lively and wide-ranging, including a focus on the seasonal epistles, the colours of the vestments and so on. Talks are planned into the programme (such as Rory Valentine's presentations of paintings by Raphael). There are biographies by members of the congregation; there is a focus on 'soul care'. And then there are individual impulses. A couple of examples: speakers from various denominations were invited to tell us about their beliefs and to share with us. More recently, 'Corpus Christi' was put into the context of our time, 'How can we best work with the Earth, the body of Christ?' This may 'blossom' into a conference between the three congregations in the South West....

Another initiative is this: to have an 'open house' on Thursdays between 10 and 1. This is very new but the rhythm of it is already beginning to pulse. Apart from using Community Rooms more (they have been used for small choirs, music rehearsals, Eurythmy), it gives a chance to browse in our quite substantial library (members who have died often bequeath us their collection). There is time to do some com-

munity work, to talk and share, to meet for whatever. Is this a pointer for the future—to use the space (including our well cared-for garden) much more beyond the occasions of services and Festivals?

Let me finish with a couple more things (and please note, that this is one 'picture' of the CC in Bristol, and it happens to be mine...): Our small chapel has a bull's eye window high up at the end of the chapel, opposite the altar. This will be enlivened in the next few months by a stained glass design by Greg Tricker. One of our members is setting out on the path to become a priest. This is exciting indeed, and we hope to be able to support her as much as possible, in all respects.

Do come and visit us sometime. There is a folding bed which can be used by visitors. Bristol is a vibrant and varied place!

Gerhard Meyer

STROUD

Overall, the Stroud Congregation has weathered the last 16 months with determination and faith. Like so many other places we have relied more on technology to keep some regular aspects going via zoom (such as the carrying group meetings, gospel study etc) and Aaron Mirkin sent out weekly issues of the 'Saturday Support' which contain the gospel reading for Sunday, a copy of the sermon and other items. These enabled the congregation to support the Act of Consecration from their homes by being internally present with the service. The 'Saturday Supports' continue to go out, to stay in touch with all those who still feel nervous about coming to church. Our weekly community news email has also helped members of the congregation to stay in touch. Our mail subscription numbers have gone up by over 40% since March 20!

The Stroud Christian Community has seen a few changes over the last 12 months. One of these was Selina Horn moving on to Forest Row in August. Carmel Iveson stepped in to help Aaron Mirkin carry the sacramental life.

Much of last year was coloured by restrictions, but in early autumn we were again able to host some much appreciated cultural events, which included Eurythmy performances, chamber music concerts and art exhibitions.

We celebrated Michaelmas together, and, thankfully, the ever popular pumpkin party was able to take place, too. Most of the Advent Sundays were filled with nourishing content including some excellent talks by Sibylle Eichstaedt titled 'Man's Search for meaning'. Sadly our advent fair had to be cancelled, but we celebrated the first part of the holy nights together before restrictions were tightened again.

All of this was possible because of the generous spaces in our delightful new building which allowed us to get together with the required spacing. The Stroud congregation deeply appreciates this wonderful space which is also enlivened by the regular presence of children. The Lantern Home Education Initiative use our community hall and garden during term-time, and Little Sundlands, a Parent and Child Group, meet here a couple of times per week.

From March the congregation could come together again which allowed for a communal celebration of Easter. Shortly after Easter ten young people were confirmed by Tom Revetz.

From April the wings of our congregation have extended to Wales, with the celebration of the first Act of Consecration of Man for many years happening on April 25 in Nant-y-Cwm. In May, a further Act of Consecration and a Baptism took place. From now on, Aaron will visit Nant-y-Cwm regularly.

For Whitsun we took the daring step of hosting an exhibition in the sacramental space of paintings of the calendar of the soul by Karin Jarman. The exhibition was accompanied by talks and Eurythmy performances connected to the soul calendar.

As we write this report the children's camp is taking place near Forest Row. 85 children, together with a large team of volunteer helpers, will experience the adventurous, magical and nourishing atmosphere of this very special time.

Gaby Horsley and Judy Mirkin

STOURBRIDGE

This has been a long year with the world shrouded in darkness; but only in darkness is the light clearly visible. Deprived of direct experience of the Act of Consecration, many members experienced that the light still shone all the way into our homes; into our hearts, as we accompanied the ritual in imagination at home. Whilst our priests and the congregation struggled with the question: does attendance at church increase the likelihood of becoming ill through contact with the virus or does the strengthening of our I through the sacrament give us the energy our immune system needs to overcome the illness, we were unable to meet and share in the communion together. It was with great joy and gratitude that we were able to attend and receive the bread and wine again last July.

What was overall clear was that we all became more aware of the light that shines from the altar, gained a clearer insight into the effectiveness of the sacraments, and deepened our relationship to the experience before the altar.

And our joy was really fulfilled when we could finally meet again, altogether, congregation and friends to celebrate the wedding of Siobhan and Johannes Moora on June 26th. At last, we could all be to-

gether outside, to sing, to dance, to feast, to congratulate the community of life of our priest and her husband. Surely, we have much this year for which we are thankful.

Nigel Lumbsden

MALTON AND BOTTON

Here at Malton, we are a Congregation, located in a converted Barn which is the community room for The Croft in a Camphill Community. The Residents form the greater number of the Congregation, with a few of us who live outside the community, far apart and in different directions. Usually the Act of Consecration is held monthly, when Siobhan Porter visits us from Stourbridge, to celebrate the Services in both Botton and Malton on alternative Saturdays and Sundays.

As both locations are within The Camphill Community, we have been very constrained by their need to shield and safeguard the Residents within the covid laws.

I expect, like for so many of us, it has felt a long time since we went into the first lockdown. Because of these unusual times and the distance between the members of our Congregation, this report will be in part a more personal response.

When we all went into the first lockdown, over 15 months ago, the shock of the whole situation left me feeling very alone and bereft of spiritual support.

After a while, our Priest, Siobhan was able to reach out to us and sent emails to help us stay connected to The Christian Community once again. These usually centred upon a fairy tale and became life nourishing, soul support and spiritual comfort for us all.

When Church Services were able to resume in July 2020, due to the covid restraints, the two Camphill Communities felt unable to welcome us back at that point.

This left us yet again in a void, with very little connection to The Christian Community both locally and nationally. Eventually, last November, after much negotiation we were able to hold an Advent Act of Consecration in the Church at Botton. We had a Christmas Service there in deep snow, an Epiphany Service and then a pause again due to the lockdown.

What a blessing it was to once again sit together, see the seasonal colours, the pictures, the 7 candles and hear the words from the altar in this beautiful church. The longer drive to Botton was balanced by stepping out of the car into this magical place, where every time Nature and the beings of Nature welcome us with shining light, peace and joy.

During the winter months Siobhan hosted a weekly zoom study, which was much appreciated by those who were able to attend.

Now we have returned to the blessing of a regular monthly Act of Consecration of Man in the Botton Church. A few of the Malton Congregation are able to attend but it is too long a drive for most of us. Sadly, as yet, we are unable to hold a Service in our Congregational home at the Croft in Malton. We still hope that this will become possible and meanwhile plan to come together in August for a Social in a member's garden.

Bridget Holmes

EDINBURGH

If a drone flew over Napier Road taking aerial photographs you would see a white marquee out in our big garden. This marquee has enabled us to gather for conversations, talks, coffee under the Christmas tree and two memorial gatherings after the services over much of the past year. It is well ventilated and quite spacious, which has been such a boon. In the time

when the population was severely hampered in what could be done, it has been wonderful to see members face-to-face, speak and laugh warmly and joyfully together and keep each other's spirits up.

Despite this, and even with Scotland having been a little out of sync with England in the exit from restrictions, we hope to be able to meet indoors again soon for Friday and Sunday talks and with a larger congregation able to attend services.

The Confirmation was held in Michaelmas last year for two girls, as well as one near the Camphill Loch Arthur community in Dumfries and Galloway which Peter Holman visits. It was very special that fairly normal services could resume at Loch Arthur in June.

In Edinburgh the afore-mentioned big garden is looking magnificent this summer. An eager group of congregants has formed to do more caring of the garden than has been possible for a year or two. The main gardener, who works one day a week, has been focused on moving plants, clearing and preparing for the start of the new building. We are hoping that if all goes to plan, the new Church and community rooms with manse could be completed by early 2023. The current house is to be sold to raise funds, while congregation and priest are set to move into temporary accommodation from early next year.

A number of our members have crossed the threshold over the past year or two, including Constance Cook who had reached the age of 105! We are trusting that they will help inspire and guide our congregation as we move strongly and bravely into a somewhat uncertain and unfamiliar future. The congregation here on earth is of good heart and has deepened and strengthened its commitment to serving the aims of the spiritual world here in Edinburgh. *Rev Peter J Holman*

MULL

On this beautiful, peaceful island with so much hidden power and spirituality, there is a small enthusiastic group which wants to connect with the sacraments of The Christian Community. The priests from Aberdeen try to visit four times a year at different festival tides. The group has found a little empty church, formerly occupied by the Free Church of Scotland, which we use for the Act of Consecration. The owner of the building is very helpful, and we may use the place whenever we want to. The first few times, we brought our foldable altar, but now the group has built one themselves. With this (semi) fixed altar in place, the substance which we build together may perhaps begin to stream out over the whole island, and possibly reach out and touch other places and people, too.

*Willem Boonstoppel and
Lucienne van Berghenegouwen*

ABERDEEN

When a storm rages over the land, we see how much damage it can cause. The wild winds bring so much fear; how can we protect our surroundings? How can we prevent the storm from blowing everything about, displacing things, blowing the roofs off our houses? And, especially when the wind dies down, how do we start to bring the pieces together again?

A storm is blowing throughout the whole world, a Covid storm. It has blown things about, both outwardly and in our souls, and it is still going on.

We in Aberdeen are trying to pick up the pieces; the separation, the polarisation, the conflicts within ourselves, and also between us as congregation members. When the storm is gone it may appear that everything is back to normal, but we should not forget the fact that things have been tossed around so violently. We

try to acknowledge the damage which has been brought about, and try to repair it; put the pieces back in place, replace the spiritual roof above our church and recreate a new safe haven in which we may gather as a community and strengthen our faith. In this way, we can take up our work in the world once again.

*Willem Boonstoppel and
Lucienne van Bergenhenegouwen*

FORRES

On Saturday, June 19, seventeen very happy people congregated in the annex-Hall of St. Leonard's Church on the High Street in Forres, to participate in the first Act of Consecration of Man in over two years. Willem led the Service and Lucienne spoke an equally very appreciated homily. It boded so well for 'our future' we felt and our congregation is swelling. The priests brought their

foldable 'travel-altar', and with the help of a few regulars the previous day, the large hall was laid out with spaced seating to allow for the necessary distancing, and the altar with backdrop was put together; flowers brought on the day then completed our church, which then really felt like home. We were able to sit in a separate area afterwards enjoying a drink and food from our various pot-luck offerings, a true testament to the good bakers and cooks in our community! Special thanks go to Rev. Donald Prentice, Minister of St. Leonard's and his congregation, for their recognition of our needs and for giving us access to their building, as the Forres group has not been able to find a permanent home of its own. However, our confidence will not fail in the help of the Spirit of our Age and in the Being of whom he is the Countenance.

Judith da Silva

Unique and Inspiring Insights

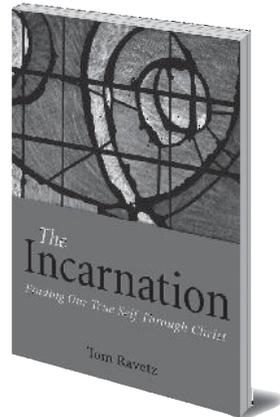
 **Floris
Books**

'A profound and reflective book'

– Cygnus Review

In this inspiring book Tom Ravetz examines the theology of the Incarnation, and traces the history of human thinking about it. He goes on to discuss Rudolf Steiner's unique insights into the Incarnation and shows how the process of incarnation is reflected in each one of us, summed up in the well-known phrase from Galatians "Not I, but Christ in me".

This invaluable book explores the difference that the Incarnation can make in our own lives today.



The Incarnation | 128 pages | paperback | 978-178250-060-5 | RRP: £14.99 | OFFER: £11.99

Visit florisbooks.co.uk for 20% off this book & free UK postage.
Enter offer code **PR0820** at the checkout.

Sign up to our mailing list for special offers and a FREE BOOK with every order.

Offer valid until 31/10/2020

**SAVE
20%**