

The Chicago Seminary News

The Christian Community

Movement for Religious Renewal

Fall Semester 2003

Seminary Update

On the weekend of September 13-14 the seminary finally sprang into visibility after many months of preparation. The title of a benefit event on Saturday evening, "A Motion and a Spirit," seemed appropriate for the entire opening celebration. Members, friends and congregations, both near and far and beyond this continent, expressed their support for this pioneering project. It gave us a sense that not only had the seminary been launched in the heartland of America, it had also found a place in the heart of our worldwide movement. The seminary looks both east and westward. From here we can already sense a subtle shift in orientation. Now the East and West Coasts are both looking to the middle, to a common growing point for the future of the Christian Community in North America and beyond.

From its inception, the "seminary being" has shown itself to be very fluid and dynamic. Often the printer's ink was not yet dry when things had changed once again. In our hometown, the Windy City, we have come to accept that *the wind - the spirit - blows where it will.*

The day after the opening of the seminary, we stepped back from signing the contract for the purchase of the building just around the corner from the church. Even though the financial response to our capital campaign from you, our members and friends, was far beyond what we had hoped for, still, the size of the building and

its cost would have required us to take out so substantial a loan, that we decided after long deliberations to look for a smaller building for now. We are actively pursuing the search and have already looked at several buildings. At the moment the students and one director live in rented apartments, and the church provides classroom space.

We have almost reached the finish line of the first semester. The "churning" in us and in the students is palpable. It gives us the confidence that what was set in motion on September 13-14 is effective. We are still very much exploring and considering the content and different forms and structures for the seminary, no doubt for some time to come. Is it possible to design a work-study program that would still allow for the intense immersion that a seminary training program requires? Often young people come out of college with large debts that hinder or even prevent their exploration of a vocation in an unconventional setting. How can the seminary assist young people to find their vocation, which may be something quite other than priesthood, but nevertheless, a calling? In what form, through what programs, can members and friends benefit beyond the Open Courses from the seminary?

The leadership asked us to go ahead and allow the seminary to grow into a full training center for the vocation of priesthood. We are very grateful to Erk Ludwig, who from 900 miles away has assisted us in the initial phase of the seminary as the third director. Now that we are a



The Chicago Seminary courses and services take place in the Christian Community building.

little more established, Oliver Steinrueck, who is part of the Chicago center, will take this role.

Our heartfelt thanks for the very tangible financial support and all the words of encouragement that we have received.

Donations are welcome. Please make check payable to the Seminary of the Christian Community and mail to: P.O. Box 25603, Chicago, IL 60625. Thank you.

Fall Courses at the Chicago Seminary

— Asharaine Machala

Studies in the Gospel of St. Mark and Rudolf Steiner's *Theosophy* are the linking threads of seminary life this fall. Richard Dancey brings his deep understanding, passion for and honoring of Steiner's work to students. Gisela Wielki often exclaims with joyful exuberance as some new aspect of the Mark gospel is revealed through our careful penetration of each word or idea. In a week, we may read only two paragraphs in *Theosophy* or the Gospel, but our rich discussions open inner worlds of inspiration to pursue these studies on our own. Both ongoing courses resonate, sometimes in surprising ways, with the week-long studies.

Eurythmy with Laura Radefeld, Speech with Christa Macbeth, and Greek with Sophia Pan also create the weekly rhythm. These teachers, all highly experienced in their fields, bring empathetic warmth to the students' questioning process and help to enliven the pulsing heart space of seminary life.

Emphasizing and interrelating with the course groundwork are the weekly lecture cycles, which are open to the greater community. Presenters are a varied group of priests and anthroposophists with different styles, personalities, passions and fields of expertise. There are definitely no "cookie cutout" versions of Christian Community priests!

Christology with Erk Ludwig, co-director of the Chicago Seminary and priest from New York, was an experience of imagining oneself at the top of a mountain in the rarefied atmosphere of high spiritual inspiration.

Then down from the mountain to the historical transition of thinking *From Mythology to Philosophy* with the lively and knowledgeable Jim Hinder, a priest from Denver, Colorado. Symbolically, we also moved to the downstairs rooms, where Jim led us through some of Plato's Dialogues. Several times "aha" was heard when some archaic university study of the classics was brought to life through Jim's lectures.

John Alexandra is an author, banker, teacher, and anthroposophist. He gave us a view into his personal

journey with spirit and ecological story through an exploration of *Abraham Lincoln*, *Martin Luther King*, *Rachel Carson* and 9/11.

The presence of Taco and Ita Bay, from Stuttgart, and the priests of the North American Synod in October provided a great learning opportunity. We observed, conversed with, and lived into the working lives of these priests. Their varied personalities, inner warmth, and love for their work revealed facets of what the seminary journey is all about.

Taco gave a course on *Biography in the Light of the Trinity*. His generous and loving demeanor was as enriching as the profound content of his lectures. More than anything, Taco emphasized that the work of the Christian Community is for the future of humanity's evolution, a sober and ennobling vision.

Michael Kientzler, a priest from Vancouver, British Columbia, brought maps, slides and a myriad of stories about the physical makeup of *The Holy Land*. Dramatic and humorous asides and anecdotes, with many accompanying expressions of "amazing" and "unbelievable" birthed a real desire in some of us to experience this land ourselves some day.

Next we followed Oliver Steinrueck to inner pictures of *The Transition from Old Testament to New Testament Consciousness*. And, appropriately, we moved to a small back room space for the lectures, crammed together a bit like it might have been in early Christian times. Oliver, Lenker of North America, lives in Chicago and is familiar to us as humorist and father of three boys. We now experienced him as learned and loving carrier of Biblical wisdom. For the first time, some of us felt inwardly motivated to actually read and study the Old Testament.

We eagerly look forward to the semester's remaining courses: Rev. Peter van Breda from London on *Shakespeare for Life*, Rev. Lothar Reubke from Berlin on *Liturgy and Music* and *The Incarnating Word*, Rev. Gisela Wielki on *The Sacraments*, and Revs. Wielki and Dancey on *Advent and Christmas Themes*.

"Having experienced the first of the open courses, I am eager to encourage everyone who can possibly arrange it to take advantage of this rich opportunity to get to know the seminary students and to join in their program of prayer, artistic activity, and study."

— Melissa Kay, open course retreat participant

"What excites me about speech formation is the conscious search for the color and weight of sounds and words to bring back the conscious reverence of language."

— Matthew Mazzoli, Seminary student

Taco Bay, Erzoberlenker of The Christian Community, Visits Chicago

— Sophia Pan and Asharaine Machala

The Reverend Taco Bay spent two weeks at the Chicago Seminary in October. In addition to giving the course entitled *Biography in the Light of the Trinity*, he addressed the Christian Community, the Synod of North American Priests and the North American Christian Community Delegates. He also spoke with the seminary students, sharing his humor and warmth.

Taco Bay describes his position as the central pillar, bearing the most weight. His personal priority as center of the priest hierarchy is actually the periphery. The task he has taken on is to encourage and nurture the spread of the Christian Community internationally. The largest international growth of communities has taken place in his time, and he has ordained the first candidates from six countries, and many others from 25 countries. He has held ordinations in Britain, France, Germany, Holland and Australia.

Taco has been a firm supporter of an English-speaking seminary. He would like to see seminaries all over the world and in many languages, and he believes there is a need for many ‘ways’ of training to be available. The Chicago Seminary is not even really born yet, he says. It is still embryonic and needs to develop strong etheric forces. Possible dangers await its development: it may be pushed too quickly into growing up; it may be held back from being born if enough students do not come to help bring it about. He affirms, however, that if the spiritual world thinks



Seminary students Sophia Pan, Matthew Mazzoli and Asharaine Machala (1st row) gather with priests Erk Ludwig, Gisela Wielki, Taco Bay, Richard Dancey (2nd row), and Ita Bay (3^d row) in Chicago.

it’s right, it will happen. Challenges may come, but also the strength to deal with them. He advises us “to get on with the job and do the best we can.” Meanwhile, he will be watching with much care and concern.

When asked when the first ordination in North America would be likely, Taco answers immediately: “as soon as there is a priest ready to be ordained.”

“A metaphor for the seminary process is entering a cocoon and turning to juice before, we hope, emerging transformed.”

— Asharaine Machala, Seminary student

“No wonder one can only commit and be accepted semester by semester. Who could predict further? It is at times painful, but ultimately rewarding.”

— Sophia Pan, Seminary student

The Act of Consecration of Man: Center Point of Seminary Life

— Asharaine Machala

The Act of Consecration of Man is celebrated in the Chicago Christian Community at 8:00 a.m. Serving pairs consist of a member from the congregation and one from the seminary. These forty-five minutes are really the place and time from which each seminary day unfolds. The seasonal colors of the vestments and the varying intensity of light shining through the colored glass windows weave a beautiful tapestry as backdrop for this sacrament.

My experiences here seem to be outside of my everyday wrestling of soul and juggling of lessons and duties. I am invited to attend just as I am in the

moment, with all of my personal agendas. If I can be present and awake to the possibilities of transformation inherent in the multi-layered activity of the ritual, I find some aspect of my Self for which I have been searching. Sometimes I find questions awaiting that I didn’t know my soul was holding. How is it possible each day to hear some new word, phrase or nuance of meaning that I hadn’t heard before? This sacred space becomes a workshop, a stage, a kitchen, a laboratory for my soul’s unfolding. Then the Spirit can shine through my day, just as the morning sun shines through the windows onto the altar.

The Seminary, Inside and Out

— Patrick Kennedy

I have been privileged to participate in one of the most significant developments in the history of the Movement for Religious Renewal: the beginning of the first Christian Community priest training outside of Europe. Perhaps it is appropriate that such dramatic statements have been avoided by those involved. After all, the seminary has as yet no building of its own and “only” three students. We are all watching to see if this Chicago venture will be able to establish itself. But we are watching with great hope, much as the early supporters of the Christian Community did as its newly ordained priests were sent out into cities to build communities from the ground up, often with just enough food and shelter to survive. We are filled with other questions as well: How will having a seminary in America change the Movement? Will the real differences between the seminaries help to fructify and cultivate the future? As this drama begins to unfold, I have been blessed with (please forgive the expression) front row seats, because I live close by.

However, my privilege does not end there. For I have been witness to the birth of *three* new seminaries within the past three years. In May 2000, I began studying at the Stuttgart Seminary (the only fully established the Christian Community seminary from 1933-2001) right when it was going through a major transformation. Only one of the four directors from the previous ten years (Michael Debus) continues to work there, and by fall 2000, two new directors joined to begin working out a completely renewed approach to the training. In fall 2001, the new Hamburg Seminary opened its doors to about thirty students, and I met most of them shortly after their first semester at the ordinations in 2002. And now, after completing five semesters in Stuttgart and then a five-month practicum with Rev. Richard Dancey in the Chicago congregation, I have had the good fortune to witness the birth of the Chicago Seminary and its inaugural semester, 2003.

My wife, Kate, and I are now working in Chicago to make possible a future return to Europe and the completion of my training. Although the seminary in Stuttgart differs greatly from the one in Chicago outwardly — in the number of students, the library, cafeteria, dormitories, gardens, the German language, etc. — the inner principle of the training is shared. This becomes evident in conversations with the seminarians, in the weekday services and the evening courses. Something of significance is going on within the students, within the community, and within the Movement — it is clearly palpable. May it continue to grow and thrive!

A Congregation Member's View

— Tom McGuire

In the past I've always felt the space within our church in Chicago crying out for more activity, just as I've felt the need in the city population for what the Christian Community has to offer. Perhaps I can call these people prospective Christian Community members and priests who don't yet know us. And now, what can I say? My wishes and imagination did not encompass the reality that has come to meet them. What an absolute thrill it has been to have the Seminary of the Christian Community come to the Chicago community! We have been enriched by the addition of three bright and delightful students to our community, and some of their teachers have kindly offered open enrollment to the greater community for their evening courses. We have enjoyed sharing thoughts with visitors who have come to attend these classes. The entire experience has tangibly enlivened our local community, and I have great hope that this activity will reach out and beckon those who don't yet know us.

'Chicago' Means 'Wild Onion'

— Sophia Pan

One October evening, three seminary students looked out over the vast expanse of Lake Michigan and the city of Chicago from Rose and Gordon Edwards' downtown high-rise apartment and watched the moon slowly rise and the monoliths gradually light up.

Not many people can bring a city to life in half an hour. Rose did. She humanized the unsightly sprawl of concrete and helped the students understand why Chicagoans love their city. She portrayed Chicago as being conceived, bullied and pimped from the beginning because of her earning potential — via slaughterhouses, exports, railways, industry, architecture. Throughout her existence, she has made money, been called a harlot, and blamed for her ugliness, her social problems, and her seeming lack of soul, which only the Blues could express.

In her turbulent adolescent years, the city burnt down but rebuilding began immediately — bigger, fancier. Although she was adorned with cultural accessories, to this day the will forces below her surface are channeled into buildings and commerce.

Perhaps these same forces support the Christian Community Seminary being here. Everyone who comes to Chicago for the open courses feels the warmth, unpretentiousness, will power, and sense of community present here. Perhaps our work will give Chicago something in return, for, as Rose suggested, Chicago needs spiritual growth, not more buildings.

Who Are the Seminary Students?

Asharaine Machala, 56, comes from Whidbey Island, Washington, where she lives with her husband and two teenage sons. She has worked for many years in dance as a performer, teacher and choreographer, and as financial manager of a Waldorf school. Her long personal journey with Anthroposophy led her to the Chicago Seminary this year.

Matthew Mazzoli, 33, is originally from North Carolina, and now lives in Norway with his wife and two children, ages one and three. For six years he cared for people with special needs, both in and out of Camphill villages. He was excited to hear about the seminary and decided to support it by attending. “My wife and I were looking for what we could support through our work. I realized that in my thinking, I was in a narrow box and wondered how to make it bigger. I was questioning what I am really enthusiastic about so I could put myself fully into my work, and what I could do that would give to the world and be creative.

“My introduction to the sacraments was extraordinarily wonderful — through the sacrament of marriage. I experience the sacraments as real work, not an abstract, vague idea. They balance the narrowing forces in the world; they create and enliven.”



Visiting Student

My name is **Georg Meier**. I am a 21-year-old German visiting the Seminary in Chicago for six weeks as part of my travels around the world.

When I met Gisela Wielki in Sydney last March, she offered me a deal to help renovate the

seminary building in return for attending the classes that interested me. Chicago seemed an attractive destination, so I agreed. When I arrived, however, there was no building yet, but I still got my part of the deal! I have been attending the open courses as well as some for only the seminary students. My impressions so far: high quality lectures; welcoming, open people; lots of dinner invitations; and despite being younger than everyone else, I've been treated as an equal part of the seminary community. I'd recommend this to any young person interested in the Christian Community, not necessarily wanting to become a priest. The seminary directors are very approachable!



The Seminary students sort garlic during their week on the farm in Wisconsin.

Sophia Pan, 33, was born and raised in Melbourne, Australia. Before Chicago, she lived in Stuttgart where she met her fiancé. Having completed a social work undergraduate degree as well as a Waldorf teacher training, she brings with her a great concern for the social realm and an open heart for the deeper questions of relationships. “It is a privilege to have the results of years of study just laid at our feet,” she says.

Comments from Open Course Retreat Participants

“What I found in my week at the seminary was not only the spiritual depth I hoped to find, but marvelous conversations, personal connections and a wealth of ideas I will live with for a long time.”

— Ruth Mary Harrop

“I can read the books myself. By myself I can also have a rich relationship with the Spiritual World and those that live there. But a christian community of seeing and being seen, of creating together, supporting and encouraging the best in each other — this one cannot do alone. I leave this week feeling seen, supported and encouraged, and also seeing the potential for a dynamic future for The Christian Community.”

— Karin Mortensen



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Please read, then pass it on.

Whom Do We Thank?

– Sophia Pan

Who birthed it? Who built it?
Who keeps it alive?
Conceived the first thought
That brought its becoming?
Who spoke it first, who then discussed it,
In countless conversations?
Who started planning, brainstorming, seeing?
Fanning the fire with ardor and verve?
Who kept moving it, turning it, forming it,
Metamorphosing it, holding, evolving it?
And when it was ready to be manifest,
Who was the architect, who was the builder?
Who raised and who gave
The money it needed?
Who spread the word and who offered help?

Who got excited and who put in time?
Who persevered and who spared no pains?
Who molded, hammered it, chiseled and formed it?
Who was unseen and who was in charge?
Solved and resolved, ministered, managed?
Who did the footwork? Who decorated?
Who cleaned and polished and who furnished it?
Who sent their wishes, their gifts, their support?
Who came and blessed it? Who prayed from afar?
Who lives inside it and who is to come?
Who feels it's big though it's only a seed?
And who hopes it will flourish and thrive?

To all of the people who did and still do,
We thank you — and the Wind blowing through.

“Don't take notes. Just get on board with the speaker, let him or her do the work, and you can dangle your feet in the water.”

– Gisela Wielki, Seminary Director
