

# North American Seminary News

THE CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY

MOVEMENT FOR RELIGIOUS RENEWAL

FALL SEMESTER 2010

## *Dear Friends of the Seminary!*

There is a priest training in English, in North America! There is a place where people can come and see if ordained priesthood might be a life-path for them. There is a place where people can come and work on the priestly aspect of their own life path. Praise God and the angels and the many people that have made and are making this possibility a reality.

That place, the Seminary has been located in Chicago since 2003 and is now moving to Spring Valley, not far from New York City and will be ready for a new class in the fall of 2011. We are a movement for religious renewal and we are on the move. The move will allow us to form a new and soon-to-be younger director-team for the seminary's future. The move will allow us to create a second year of study, moving towards a full training in English. There are 11 priests in 6 communities that can provide the resources needed to make these moves in the development and unfolding of the seminary. The move will allow more people to have easy access to the training--to come and see. The move will allow the seminary to participate more in the life of one-half of the congregations on this continent.

For all of these reasons--we are on the move, looking and leaning forward into the future. We do not know what all will be happening in the world and in The Christian Community in the coming years. We, like Abraham, are moving into new, uncharted, unknown territory. We will discover what that future brings by moving into it with courage and trust and determination. We are not waiting to see--we are moving forward.

- Richard Dancey, Co-director



Sunset over Chicago



On the way to Emmaus



Spring Valley chapel in morning light

## **BEING HERE**

- Darryl Coonan

Presently with the title – Priest Trainee, Forest Row

In July this year 2010, I began a twelve months placement as a 'priest trainee' in Forest Row, England. This is the largest congregation in Britain and possibly in the English-speaking world. The little village of Forest Row has had a worldwide impact through such iconic institutions as Michael Hall (the first English speaking Steiner School) and Emerson College, a centre for Anthroposophical studies for over 40 years. There are nearby Camphill communities and other artistic schools of art, speech, drama and eurhythmy. One is both in a small classic English village while also in the midst of wide and varied spiritual and cultural endeavors. My time here began after a year in the Stuttgart Seminary, preceded by a year at the Chicago Seminary. Two of my recent predecessors in Forest Row had also begun their journey in Chicago – Paul Newton (now in Stuttgart) and Jonah Evans, one of the two priests in Spring Valley.

My life here is one more step on a journey with no guaranteed destination. I may one day become a priest, or perhaps end up somewhere else completely; the outcome depends on so many variables, and part of the challenge is to trust the process - that what happens will be right for me and for others. I need to be both committed and open and yet unattached to any particular outcome. It feels like a paradox, as one needs to hold an attitude of acceptance for what will happen, while also being determined - to strive, and on another level to be willing to surrender to the will of higher beings.

The Forest Row community is quite used to having trainees passing through, and I was a little surprised at their willingness to reach out and connect with me, as I imagined they would have developed a little emotional cautiousness by now and not wish to invest too much in someone 'only passing through'. The community is busy and has three priests, plus two retired priests. So the members have lots of breath and depth on offer to have their spiritual and pastoral needs met. This community is established and has lots of resources available to keep it functioning, not to mention also having someone like me to be a live-in back up and all round

resource to members and priests alike. I think it is a wonderful exchange and mutually rewarding for a trainee priest to live into the life of a busy church and experience all the offerings of the Christian year, while in exchange to be available to support and carry many tasks to alleviate some of the burden on the priests as well as for the congregation.

Gisela Wielki once said to me that while in Europe I should fill my backpack with as many different experiences as I can find so I can bring them back home to my life in Australia, as living at the end of the world can make it hard to mix and meet and participate in the scope of offerings available closer to the 'Hub' of the Christian Community. So I am taking it all in and look forward to the remainder of my time in Britain and to what comes afterwards.



Chicago alumni Ann Burfeind and Darryl Coonan (class of 08)

## **PRAYER – SOME THOUGHTS**

- Darryl Coonan

Rudolf Steiner said that there is one archetypal prayer, and as I read this I expected he would continue with the Lord's Prayer, "the Prayer of Prayers"! I was therefore a little surprised to find him say that the archetypal prayer is "Oh my Father, if it be possible let this cup pass from me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as Thou wilt." (Matthew 26:39) This prayer indicates the attitude, which must be the fundamental starting point for all prayer. An attitude of surrendering to the Divine Power has always had appeal to

me, as I so often struggle with the demands of the world with only my poor little ego constantly and valiantly trying to control all that comes towards me.

To surrender to the Divine Will involves acceptance, trust, openness and a giving up of the attempt to be in control. When one surrenders it is not the same as blind faith, but stems out of awareness that nothing that comes to us is random, that the divine has a plan for us and when we open to this with devoted acceptance we allow the future to enrich us and enliven us. The whole attitude of devoted acceptance is such a powerful antidote to the anxiety and fear that so frequently paralyze our existence in today's world. The basic attitude in prayer of devoted acceptance of the Divine Will is truly the most liberating position to adopt in our lives. Not surprisingly we find this sentiment so clearly expressed for us in the Lord's Prayer – "thy will be done". One needs constantly the solace of prayer to overcome our chronic default position of "my will be done!"

## NEWS FROM STUTTGART

- Paul Newton

*"Die Mysterien finden im Hauptbahnhof statt" –  
J. Beuys*

Well, it's been another quiet week in Stuttgart, here on the edge of the Swabian Alps. Only the usual Monday and Friday demonstrations against the so-called Stuttgart 21 (Einundzwanzig) rather than the over 100,000 crowd of a couple of weeks back. Folks in America can be forgiven if they haven't been following this story, but it's been a big deal in Germany. The citizens are up in arms against a massive (massively disruptive and massively expensive) redevelopment of the main railway station.

In the Seminary, perched on its hillside overlooking the city center down in the valley, students in the ordination preparation course continue to give sermons in the daily Act of Consecration. The sound of their knees knocking isn't disturbing the quiet too much. The second year students have been working

on their individual projects on the Gospel of John. Some are looking happy; others a little stressed; others look so tired you have to assume they've been staying up nights trying to read every last thing that Rudolf Steiner or Friedrich Rittelmeyer had to say on the subject.

The weather, which had been cold and wet, turned suddenly warm again towards the end of the week and it was a pleasure to go visit the Seminary bees and see them active again. The Seminary garden is looking good, ready for winter. The oak tree out front of the building is still a beautiful golden yellow and in the late autumn sunshine is a glorious sight.

A chief feature of the Seminary is the preponderant use of the German language. For certain students this can make exact comprehension challenging. What is even more disconcerting is to ask a German student, "What on earth was that all about?" only to be told that they're not quite sure either. And if you think trying to understand German spoken by Germans might be tricky, imagine German spoken by Czechs, Finns, Russians...

Chicago alumnus (Class of '07) Fernando Chevallier was still in town this week, taking a course to improve his German. It must be said that it's pretty impressive having breakfast conversation *alles auf deutsch* with an Argentinian who had told me in Chicago that English was bad enough but no way José was he going to manage German. Alumna Karin Eppelsheimer (also Class of '07) who's here in the first year doesn't appear to have any problem whatsoever with the German language.



Fernando Chevallier, Paul Newton, Karin Eppelsheimer

The foreigners here had a moment of quiet satisfaction the morning that the Act of Consecration of Man was celebrated in Finnish. They couldn't understand a word but then neither could the Germans.

I am writing this report in one of the three Starbucks within a few blocks of each other in downtown Stuttgart. Judging by how busy they always are they could open a couple more. I come here to work on Greek (go figure). You have to be on your toes if you want to speak German: one false move and the young person behind the counter will try speaking English with you. Starbucks is mostly filled with young Germans but today the couple opposite me are Americans, each on their own iPhone surfing the internet for concert tickets. They're not keen on the upcoming Stuttgart gig by Alice Cooper. I believe I'm going to give that one a miss too.

Herr Newton came to an important decision this week. *If* he doesn't wind up as a priest he sees the possibility of a seriously lucrative entrepreneurial venture: the introduction of "quark" to North America. Quark, which appears on the seminary breakfast tables each morning, is a milk product that can truly be said to be one of the pleasures of life - and, gosh darn it, Americans are missing out!

Finally the Garrison Keillor-esque nature of this report would not be complete without a mention of Lutherans. I believe they have some here but I'm not quite convinced they cook with Campbell's condensed soup and jello. I believe that might be just a Midwest Lutheran thing but I'll try to find out. OK?

### MY BRAND NEW EYES

- Rafal Nowak

Last year, together with my wife Senzelle and our son Józef we made a trip overseas. Little did we know then that we brought with us an "extra" passenger - our daughter Oriana, who was conceived a couple weeks before our trip, as we later realized! This was our first family visit to my home town, Kraków. I had left Poland 10 years ago, in the summer of 2000. For me it was a true experience of coming back Home. I had left by myself, unable to see or understand deeper realities of the world. Now I was coming back with my own family, as a completely different person. Besides my dear wife and our child, I brought back something that I happened to "acquire" through my studies of Anthroposophy and my involvement in The Christian

Community here in America: *a pair of brand new eyes*, which can at times see beyond the surface of things. It was in New York City - this great crossroad of modern humanity - that I "discovered" Anthroposophy. My relationship with The Christian Community also began in New York, where we later received the Sacrament of Marriage and where our first-born was baptized.

One day in Kraków, as I was roaming through my old neighborhood on my recent visit, I happened to walk by the place where my relationship with the Christ began - the Roman Catholic Church of St. Casimir. It was there that my parents baptized me; I received the sacrament of First Communion and I was Confirmed there (in Roman Catholicism, these two are separate). I spent countless hours at the altar in that church, serving as the altar boy from when I was 8 years old until when, at the age of 12, I was actually "expelled" from the altar by one of the priests. This happened at the time when my interest in rock music was germinating. I grew a short "rat tail" in the back of my head, maybe 2 inches long. This priest really did not like this idea and told me to cut it, or else I will not be able to serve. I guess this was a good enough reason to rebel and turn me away from religion for many years to come...



Now - years later - I stood in the main entrance of that church, looking inside through the glass door. It was late afternoon on Saturday and the evening Mass was being celebrated. As I looked at the altar which was once so dear to me, I realized that *I have actually never seen* what it represents. What I did not remember - or did not realize - was that on both sides of the massive cross with the figure of the dying Jesus, there stand wooden sculptures of His Mother and the Beloved Disciple. All of it is big, with a central cross reaching perhaps 12 feet high and the figures being about 8 feet high each. This scene described in John 19:25-27 is an important image for anyone who lives with the Gospel of John.

It is also an essential element of the life of The Christain Community. This scene was there through all those years but I did not see it. It worked silently, shaping the virginal soul substance of the child I once was, bestowing it with the mood I was later to *re-cognize* in the teachings of Anthroposphy. I can perceive it now with *my new eyes*, which grow as a consequence of my relationship with Christ Jesus. Perhaps what led me away from my childhood church was not simply my antipathy towards the Catholic Church - that regards itself to be the Mystical Body of the Christ.

Perhaps it was His Will that eventually brought me to *the Church to whom all belong who are aware of the healing power of the Christ* - a supersensible *Ecclesia* - of which The Christian Community is a visible member in our world.

#### Post Scriptum

After a year spent at the seminary in Chicago, 2005-2006 - I realized that before I went ahead with my further training I needed to enrich my essential life experience. I found this enrichment in my marriage and in my fatherhood - which both can be extremely challenging at times! Everyday happenings in our Community of Life: taking care of our children, taking care of each other, sharing our work responsibilities and building our relationships with others - are the best practicum I could have ever imagined! It is also an ongoing training in service, where offering and receiving becomes the foundation and support of our life with each other. Now with a bag full of new experiences I, together with my family, am looking forward to continuing my priest training in the fall of 2011.



Jozef, Rafal, Senzelle and Oriana Nowak

## **SAILING WITH THE WIND**

- Ann Burfeind

The first frost of the season is beginning to appear on the rooftops of Central Europe. The autumn is waning and winter will soon be here. I am told that winters in Kassel are cold, damp and dark. We will see. I have begun my practicum in The Christian Community and intend to remain in Kassel until June. As a former Waldorf teacher I am happy to be in and around the schools again and working with confirmation groups. There is nothing like children to keep life authentic and focused, especially eighth graders! My German continues to improve as I listen to the constant stream of chatter that comes from the children. The vocabulary is also different from what I learned at Stuttgart in Seminary classes.

I took a break from the German this summer and came back to North America to help Richard and Amos Dancey with the Midwest Children's Camp.



Ann Burfeind far right with campers

It was a joy to see so many of the children from my former Waldorf School in Milwaukee and from the community in Chicago and the many affiliate communities that are spread across Wisconsin and Minnesota. This summer there were a number of children that came from the new and growing Waldorf Community in Madison, Wisconsin. Richard visited there a number of times this past year, widening and lengthening the scope of The Christian Community in the Midwest. The camp each summer brings together for two weeks children, young people and adults to live, play, eat and pray together. We hear stories and sing songs. Many of the young people who now are counselors were once campers. Before camp officially starts the counselor and directors gather together to "create" the mood of the camp by sharing intentions and ideas of this year's camp as well as remembering stories from previous camps. Camp is a community that is created, lives for two weeks and then is

packed up, cleaned up and put away until the next year.

Camp is not always easy for everyone involved. It can be challenging for the children to be away from home and the young people have the huge responsibility of caring for these children. Everyone is pushed to their boundaries and many find that they can do what previously they could not. I find camp a great microcosm for the macrocosm of everyday life. In this short-term community we can try things out, learn who we are in a safe way.

This Easter I will help direct a Christian Community family camp here in Germany. I find the exploration into new forms of living and working together in community very exciting and am looking forward to helping bring into being this camp where parents and children together experience camp.

**A Three-Day Workshop in Chicago  
November 4 – 6, 2010  
with James Dyson, MD  
Stourbridge, UK**

***The Heart and Blood Circulation in Relation to the Seven Life Processes, the Mystery of Golgotha and the Christian Mysteries***

The Seminary invited the Chicago Rudolf Steiner Branch to take part in this event and it became a joint venture, appreciated by all.



Close to 60 people participated. Many were locals but a substantial number of people came from all over the country who had heard Dr. Dyson speak on other occasions in different settings. The concentrated content and presentation of Dr. Dyson's talks and the enthusiasm of his listeners,

allowed a building up of substance, tangible in its breadth and depth.

REFLECTIONS by - Gail McManus, California

“Very recently I had the fortunate privilege of attending the workshop with Dr. James Dyson at the Chicago Christian Community seminary. Presented in the five profoundly moving lectures were the themes of the heart and the seven life processes, their esoteric significance, their qualities and manner of function.

Each lecture was breathtakingly imbued with vast cosmic pictures, yet the still place of the heart, the place of discernment, of Presence, of the I – Thou relationship remained the central focus around which the lectures wove. Surrounding the lecture presentations were the delicately heart-thought awakening considerations of the epistles in the Act of Consecration of Man with Revs. Wielki and Dancey. Music and eurythmy exercises further illumined the workshop theme, and the service celebrated each morning was as a solid foundation out of which sprang the living inspirations shared throughout the days. Each activity informed the others. Each sounded a chord in the hearts of the participants which continued to ring in the engaging conversations which accompanied meals.



The workshop gave me delicious food for thought. It deepened my understanding of cosmic destiny and my place and task within it. I returned home strengthened and encouraged in my intention to deepen empathic connections with other human beings”

## AUTUMN BLOOM

- Gisela Wielki, Co-director

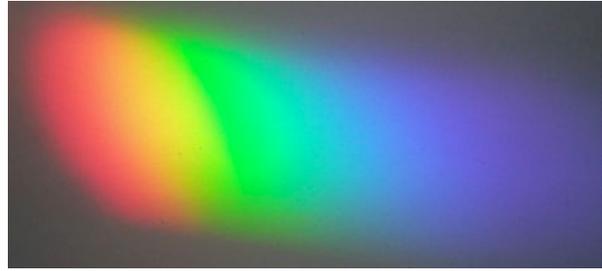
This is the last rose from the Seminary garden. It is November 2010. So many hands have worked the soil and plant life of this patch of city land over the last seven years. Every student, guests who came for Open Courses, have planted, weeded, watered, cut the grass, trimmed the rose bushes, enjoyed the flowers. Sometimes it was done as a group, sometimes alone, some times light-hearted, other times while pondering ones own cycle of growth and change, the inner labor of expansion and contraction, of taking root, of letting go.



Some of the students have by now become priests and work not only in North America, but also in other parts of the world. Others are still on the way. But all and everyone who has ever taken part in Seminary life and in the tending of its garden, will surely have taken back into their lives the heartfelt knowing that it was a fertile time of inner growing.

So much has been given since the founding of the seminary in Chicago in the fall of 2003. Students have put their trust in a process of growing and learning that is so challengingly open ended. Guests have come trusting to find for their lives renewal, new direction.

On my window sill a dodecahedron, cut of glass, catches the rays of the late afternoon sun, casting a glorious rainbow onto the wall as I write these words



Generous donors have entrusted us with the financial means to acquire a building that has helped us greatly and so surprisingly quickly, to develop an identity. Over the years a growing circle of donor friends has helped us to establish and maintain a training that is at once directed towards the earth and the heavens above and the world around us.

All this has laid the foundation for the next chapter in the biography of the Seminary. Soon the garden will have to be prepared for winter and for a new season. The Seminary will experience this new growing season no longer on the 'Third coast', but on the East coast in Spring Valley. The building has gone on the market and will become liquid in time, allowing us to break ground or move into an already existing building at our new location.

We look forward to welcoming a new group of students in the fall of 2011. Some have already been knocking on the door.

*Dear Friends, It was such a blessing staying at the seminary this weekend (AGM Meeting, Oct. 16/17<sup>th</sup>). I would like to give my thanks to all who had a part in making it what it is today. When I first walked into the building I was taken back by such a true and beautiful feeling. I believe wherever the Seminary ends up, it will flourish.*

*Thanks again, Shelby White*

*Dear Donors,* the words above express what students and faculty alike would like to say to all of you. **Thank You!** Your support over the years has made this beautiful place possible and the earnest work within, seasoned with joy and laughter, has enriched, broadened and deepened the lives of many.

We too believe that the Seminary is destined to flourish, and we trust in your continued interest and support.

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