



North American Seminary Newsletter

Fall 2012

Dear friends,

Welcome to the 2012 Fall newsletter of the North American Christian Community Seminary.

Our recently purchased building is under renovation and our newly appointed seminary director, Bastiaan Baan, from the Netherlands, is still waiting for his work visa. However, none of that stopped us from having a deep, full and enriching semester.

The following pages offer a taste of these fall months. What happens when a storm leaves us without power for six days? What do you need to feel at home? Why do we study Ancient Greek at the seminary? Would you like to take a step closer to the mysteries of Christianity? Do color and artistic work connect to soul development? Also, enjoy poems, pictures and more.

It has been a semester of growth and consolidation. We hope you enjoy stepping into our world and will be inspired to join us for an open course. See you soon!

The Seminarians



Main Courses

Fall 2012

Fundamentals of Forming Christ Community, Richard Dancey

A Pathway to Living Knowledge, Craig Holdrege

Living with the Act of Consecration, Gisela Wielki

The Incarnation of the Logos in Language, John Wulsin

Early Christianity, Oliver Steinrueck

The Mystery of Evil: A Manichaeon Vision of the Future, Christine Gruwez, NL

A week of Art, Peter Bruckner

Evolution, Spiritual Science and Christianity – Confronting the Rift Between Science and Religion, Michael Judge

Christianity: A Body Building Religion, Gisela Wielki

Angels – Divine Messengers, Julia Polter

The Seven Life Processes, James Dyson, MD, UK

Theory of Color, Daniel Hafner

Rudolf Steiner's Mystery Dramas, Daniel Hafner

Weekly classes:

First year: Gospel of Mark, Occult Science (Steiner), June Course (Steiner) World of Things, Greek I, Speech I.

Second year: Autumn Course, (Steiner), Occult Science (Steiner), sermon work, themes from the Gospel of John, working in the congregation, Greek II, Speech II.

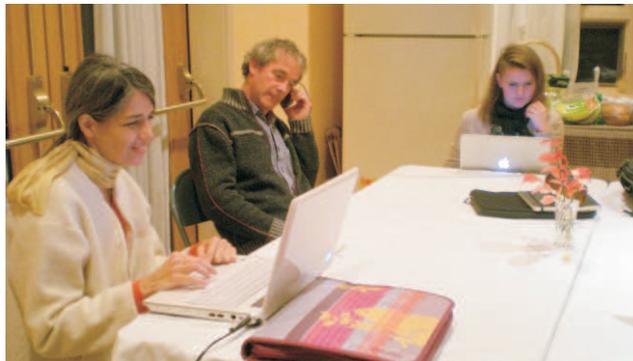
Both years together: Eurythmy, garden work, singing, story telling, Week in Review.

“It’s an ill wind that blows no good”

We have storms in the UK, rain, hail and snowstorms, but rarely hurricanes. The last big storm hit South East England in 1987 and it has not been forgotten. So it was not without a degree of curiosity that I awaited the arrival of Hurricane Sandy. Predictions of its combination with the high tides, cold weather fronts and suspected landfall near New York City, all bolted on to the proximity of Halloween, allowed the media to coin the nickname “Frankenstorm”. Power cables were down during the first hour of its arrival in Hungry Hollow Road. What struck me most was not the speed of the wind but its extraordinary volume, its *viscosity*. The walk from the dorm to the church the following morning was utterly changed, now being strewn with mighty trees that had been seemingly pushed rather than blown over.

The seminary kitchen at Holder House, the dormitory where we live with eurythmy students, biodynamic gardening interns and community college students, became a center of activity due to having a temporary generator. Power strips were spliced onto incoming cables to recharge ranks of laptops and cell phones. People who had previously only passed one another in the hallways now shared food, light and conversation. A new sense of community pervaded the house as people were forced into a different relationships with one another.

The church itself became the communications hub for the broader Threefold Community; it was one of the few buildings with power, internet and phone connections. The kitchen table and hallways became an internet cafe with people dropping in day and night to communicate and work. The storm energized the life of the church and encouraged a readiness to open the door and share resources. Somewhat amazingly, seminary classes continued with little interruption. Even whilst Frankenstorm prowled in the darkness outside, Michael Judge began his week-long evening course on Evolution, Spiritual Science and Religion.



Meet the Seminararians



Lisa Hildreth

Lisa used to be a Waldorf kindergarten teacher before she found a new path to Christ. Now she is a second year student at the Seminary. During holiday breaks, she journeys home to the greater Boston area to be with her husband and teenage sons. Music and comedy are close to her heart.



Linda Wemhoff

Love, Striving, Spiritual Connection, Gratitude and Joy... My daughter Melody opened my heart to love 22 years ago. My occupations as Macrobiotic Cooking Teacher, Non-Violent Communication Mediator, Christian Community Seminararian, and “One Spirit” Interfaith Minister align with my striving to contribute to humanity and my purpose of connecting with God/Spirit/Oneness. My family, friends and teachers, and the beauty of the Earth fill me with gratitude and joy.



Isabela Seabra

Having worked from Anthroposophy as a biographical counsellor and fibre art therapist in Brazil and in Canada, I found in The Christian Community the path to a much deeper healing available to all. I am truly grateful to be at the Seminary and carry a sincere hope to share the blessings of this journey with my fellow human beings through service. Wherever I go, in my heart are my children and grandchildren.



Rory Valentine

I am very much enjoying my first visit to the USA, everything is new! In Devon, England I am married with three “flown” children. My working life has been as a furniture designer / maker. I feel so fortunate to be here and absorb what I can of the wonder-filled teaching that is given to us in such abundance and with such skill.



Emma Heirman

In numbers:

- 2 (my year at Seminary)
- 14 (years I attended Waldorf – Acorn Hill and Washington Waldorf)
- 23 (times I have attended/worked at Christian Community Summer Camp and Youth/Young Adult Conferences)
- 28 (my age)
- 0 (regrets I have about coming to the Seminary)

In places I've lived: Silver Spring, MD, Gambier, OH, and Santiago, Chile

In a few of my own words: I am a human being; I live in a body. I'd like to get out of it sometimes and be better in it most of the time. Seminary helps. I hope, in turn, to serve the world.

Waiting

I imagined a demon today pass
across the face of the screen
not behind, not inside
just entangled in electricity,
bound with chemistry
trapped by magnetism.

The machine now reposes
brooding – at ease
waiting
sleek on the table
black and silver
the colors of the moon
hardly colors at all.

Rory

Blue

This bark carries blue in its memory,
one faded, from long ago.
A white curtain of time (or forgetfulness)
shrouds it, pushing it far away.
Makes me question, doubt:
was blue ever even there?
And I am reminded,
and I remember,
stirring up within me it comes,
what this bark and I share:
a memory.
Blue.

Emma

Reflections on Form

Last May, I traveled with my fellow first-year students to study for a couple of weeks at The Christian Community Seminary in Stuttgart, Germany. On arriving, one of my first impressions was of solidity and form. It was to be expected, in a way, as I was journeying to see a beginning place, *the foundation* of training to be a priest in the Christian Community. Everything at the Stuttgart Seminary spoke to me of structure, form, ritual, rhythm, and strength. I was held in the best possible way.

Why were my impressions so vivid? Maybe it is because the Seminary here in the USA is at a very different place in its biography. While still in its first decade, it moved from Chicago to Spring Valley, New York. The spacious stone building in Chicago was sold and the seminary entered a phase of homelessness.



I began as a North American Seminary student just at this time. I too was homeless, having given up my Waldorf teaching job, sold my family's house, and temporarily separated from my family. Like the Seminary, I was trying to find myself and my role in a new setting.

The Spring Valley Christian Community Church became our gracious host. We not only had our morning services in its chapel, but its kitchen and chapel served as our main classrooms. We lived in a general student dormitory with eurythmy students and biodynamic gardening interns. We walked to the nearby Waldorf School for our Eurythmy classes. We tread the pathways through the woods between these buildings daily.

Again, I learned a lesson I had experienced in the Waldorf classroom – when the outer structure is not present, one can carry it within. So although our Seminary lacked a cohesive outer structure, we were, by our own activity, able to create the learning spaces that we needed.

Now the Seminary and I are both in our second year in Spring Valley. Both of us are growing. For the first time, a second year of priest training is being offered in the United States. I am one of these pioneering students. A Seminary building was purchased this summer, and classrooms are currently being renovated for our growing group.

Will I miss our makeshift kitchen and chapel classrooms? Actually, I think I will. For just as the Seminary is finding its new home, I have discovered that many places feel like home to me. I carry my home within me now and can be just as comfortable in myself wherever I am, whether it is in a “foreign” country like Germany or in the backyard of the house where I grew up.

Lisa Hildreth

Hands

Fast, moving, intriguing
Their tips see things eyes cannot see
Back and forward
Defining width, length, depth
Mysteriously wise...
Human hands! Servants of the world!
Shaped by will,
Through will,
They shape to existence all things that will to be.

Isabela



A yellowing leaf falls from the branch of an oak tree. It drifts down and halts, then down and halts again as it gently makes its way to the ground.

Whose hands break its fall?

Emma

Unexpected Revelations

I am the newbie to the Christian Community among my fellow students as my daughter introduced me to it only recently. Having gone to Catholic Mass almost every day through college and then looking at different religions since that time, the questions that I've asked in our Main Lessons here at the Seminary might seem very basic to most of you who are reading this newsletter. However, having my questions answered has completely changed my life and deepened my connection with Christ. I wanted to share some of these insights, in case you have someone in your life who might happen to see this newsletter and have questions that were similar to mine!

Is the Jesus Christ as seen in the Christian Community different from the Jesus Christ I grew up with as a Catholic? I had always believed that Jesus was already Christ when He was born. Although Christ and the angels were with the Jesus child, it wasn't until John baptized Jesus that Christ descended from the world of spirit and entered into the being of Jesus. Christ was only incarnated on earth for those three years that He was in the body of Jesus and with the disciples.

What was the significance of the Mystery of Golgotha? Through the Mystery of Golgotha, Christ incarnated into the earth and with the resurrection, his body expanded to encircle and envelop the earth and to embrace all of humanity with Christ-consciousness. His love and his compassion are now available to everyone. And, anytime we are compassionate and loving, we nourish this compassionate "force" for every human being and for the entire planet.

How did Christianity evolve? After the Mystery of Golgotha, the early Christians called themselves "The People of the Way." They kept the strict rules of the Jews and on the day after the Sabbath they celebrated a meal in honor of the Risen One. It was in 50 AD in Antioch that The People of the Way were first called Christians, even though they were still thought of as a sect of Judaism. Besides Jesus' presence and His teachings, other reasons why Christianity spread were Christians cared for the sick and poor, women were not excluded, and the Romans had built safe roads for people to travel on.

How did the Christian Community start? In his early years, Rudolf Steiner was critical of established Christianity. It wasn't until 1921, when he met with mostly young people who sought religious renewal that he responded to the request. In his instructions he made it clear that such a movement would have to be based in the sacraments, focus on free communities with free thought, have no political involvement, and give men and women equality on all levels.

What qualities are important for the priest to have to build community?

Some important qualities for the priest and every human being to develop are deep listening, discernment, courage, continued striving to see Christ in the other, will-in-action, wonder, compassion and conscience. Rudolf Steiner also mentioned in the “Symptomology” lectures the important virtues of: developing the ability to truly accept another for who they are, learning to love the mistakes of others, speaking only about what we can confirm, and cultivating joy and perseverance.

How does the Act of Consecration of Man nurture the world today? The Christian Community wishes to serve the Living Christ. We are always living on the two paths of earthly concerns and responsibilities and the higher realms that we reach towards. We look to the Christ who is coming towards us and we move towards Him in the sacrament. The Act of Consecration of Man is a healing place, a threshold, a journey and a health-bestowing environment that helps us “re-align” ourselves. When we are in the Act of Consecration of Man, the communion service, our higher selves are intersecting with that stream of prayer mentioned in the Book of Revelation where the twenty-four living Beings around the throne are unceasingly praying. By setting aside an hour of the everyday life, we are nourished by Christ and these higher beings and we are co-creating with them to support Love now and in the future.

Linda Wemhoff

Love

Being of Love,
You are like the sea –
Vast, deep, and pulsing with Life.
I long to be with you,
To be enfolded in your Love.

Supported, comforted,
I float in your waves.
Seeking, suffering,
I cry out for your depths.

I plunge beneath the foam.
Sinking, I feel the truth of your Love.
Unconditional, all-embracing,
It fills me.

What can I offer you, O Christ,
But my small love,
My small life?
Take them.
I am yours.

Lisa

Community: a personal reflection.

A few weeks into this first semester I realized that it would be necessary to achieve a balance between the course content and its digestion. So I picked up a novel! It came as something of a relief to enter the easily comprehensible world of the story: a young man's girlfriend leaves him for his best friend, the friendship ends – much later in life the (now old) man discovers that a venomous letter he had written at the time to his friend has had huge and terrible consequences for a number of people. He himself, however, had all but forgotten he had ever written the letter. Two questions here arose for me: What went wrong? And could the situation ever be put right?

It seemed that one thing that clearly went wrong is communication; the characters fell out of community with one another. If they had carried on communing, the situation need not have developed and become so very stuck in the past. The story prompted me to consider how the little things I may or may not think, say or do can affect people and circumstances in a way that can seem disproportionate to their size. Of course consequences need not be bad, but can also be similarly disproportionately good.

Here in the seminary I feel the sensitivity to the consequences of these *little* things in our daily interactions to be very alive. I experience this as, among other things, an attention to detail, a remembering to follow up, the spontaneous giving of time – simple human things that can so often be overlooked in the busyness of the days. I suspect that it is through this aliveness that we can form genuine open community. This aliveness must of course, be made real by doing things together, for it is in this that something can go out beyond the immediate community. This elusive aliveness cannot be taken for granted; it must ever be recreated, for as it slips away community dissolves and is replaced by a closed feeling of the dull and duty bound.

In the novel, the consequences of the letter are amplified to an unbearable degree, so large as to seem irredeemable. What sort of healing, I wondered, could there be for the letter writer – for he who has wrought such damage? Confession in one form or another is widely recognized as a first step to healing. This natural human impulse is echoed in the novel by the fact that it is written as a confessional in the first person by the letter writer; here it ends but I could not help thinking that in the Christian Community the Sacrament of Consultation is made complete by the act of Communion before matters can be laid to rest.

Rory Valentine

Joy!

I used to be a compulsive list-maker. The lists were supposed to help me accomplish things, but more often than not they glared back at me what I did not accomplish. I thought I had outgrown my list making, but early this fall, when Richard Dancey asked us how one can cultivate joy in oneself and in others, a list is what poured out. This list is different from the ones I used to write; they are not things to do and cross off, saying, I'm done! This list stays and simply reminds me: you know how to cultivate joy, now go do it!

Be with others (people, animals, plants, rocks).
Do what you love.
Share what you love, sometimes share why you love it.
Start today fresh. Meet each person with full knowledge that even if you have know them for 20 years, today they are also new.
Take time to learn about the world.
Go outside. Run in the rain.
Fall in love, all the time, with everyone and everything.
Make eye contact and remember those eyes.
Learn names and use them.
Get to know someone's story. Let go of your own story and be filled with another.
Hug someone tightly and mean it, when they need it.
Tell someone you appreciate the hard work they do.
Sing!
Make music, especially if you aren't a trained musician.
Feed your neighbor's cat and accept nothing in exchange.
Smile at strangers.
Ask someone to join you, whenever and wherever.
Remember the sun in the sky. Be like the sun. Be the sun for others.
Get to know babies, maybe even your own.

Emma



Found in Translation

The one thing I was 100% clear and vocal about in my life before I came to the Seminary was my love of languages. I was enamored by the word – its myriad forms and expressions across the globe – and followed it where I could, beyond classrooms and books to new countries and people. Today, in my second year of Seminary training, I find my path does not stray from this first love. In fact, it walks right through it, grabs hold of it and lifts it up. How? In a word: Greek.

At the Seminary, one begins the study of Ancient Greek in order to delve into the New Testament in its penned language. In priesthood, this leads to independent translation work. With one year of study completed and a second year in progress, I realize how much even just the beginnings of Greek knowledge have helped me to form a relationship with the Gospels. Although I grew up hearing readings from the Gospels and had begun to study parts of the New Testament with some friends in the few years leading up to Seminary, the true meaning of the text felt distant. How could I really ever grow to know what the Gospel authors were revealing? With the ongoing study of Greek, words that were stuck or even dead are given new life, new meaning, and more meaning. For example, my understanding for time was broadened and nuanced by coming across the Greek word “aionā”. It is translated often as age, eternity, or ever, depending on the version and the context. These words most strongly call into contrast time without end and undefined time. Presented with these differences, I turn to books and I engage my imagination. It is a process of allowing everything to go blurry, of loosening my conceptual connection to the English words to allow the Greek to speak. And “aionā” comes, slowly and over time.



While Greek has not given me truth, it has become a tool for me to use to find myself ever closer to the mysteries of the Gospels. For the second time in my life, I learned an alphabet and these letters have formed building blocks much like my experiences in my first year of Seminary: foundation-building. They rest firm under my feet and I am free to rise up on my own legs to begin to explore the ground on which I stand. Insights are dawning and I am beginning to see, to recognize, the world around me. Though at times it seems miraculous, it is not a smooth or easy process. In fact, I feel much like a young child in her second year, learning to speak. My babbling, however sweet it has been, is shaping into new words each day, though full of mistakes. But I form these words; I am working hard for them consciously. This language has

found me and I choose it. And about the Gospels, I don't know what I will say in the future, but if you ask me about them today, I will respond with a smile, "They're Greek to me."

Emma Heirman

Ponderings about Color and Soul

My path from our living space to the church is through the woods. Naturally, the recent storm affected it greatly. However, before the storm, I had been in awe of the beauty and intensity with which the color in this path brought fall into our days. I wondered deep in my soul about the reality of color, where it comes from and where it goes to when the red, orange and yellow leaves I happily played with die on the ground.

My fellow seminarians and I had a good opportunity to ponder these things in the week just before the storm. We spent five days at Peter Bruckner's studio in Chester County, PA taking an art course. I will not attempt to share everything in the length of this article, but I hope this conversation will be a pointer to the significance of this work.

First, the experience of fall colors was intensified because trees, which created a golden canopy over us, surrounded the studio. Peter led us through the experience of color using pastels and watercolor. He instigated us to perceive the spiritual aspects of color as we worked on artistic exercises. Colors can be dull, flat, and dead. So, what makes color vibrant, multi-dimensional and alive? We looked at three aspects of color experience to explore this question.

Colors like to flow from one to another as we see in the rainbow. Have you noticed that there is no definite line dividing the rainbow colors? A red surface, for example, can be enlivened if it can flow into orange on one end and purple on the other. Any color will be enlivened if it can slide into its warmer and cooler versions. Another aspect of our studies of color was its interaction with light and darkness. When black touches red it grows into a deep rose red; touched by white, it delights us with shades of pink. One can go further reaching complete black and white on each extremity indicating a connection with earth and heaven. Lastly, meeting its complementary can enliven color. Many people have done this experiment of looking at a red spot painted on a paper for a few minutes, then directing their gaze to a blank paper and there the complementary color appeared in a magical way. In the case of red, green will appear. They can be just side-by-side mutually enriching or, if we start mixing them, we will discover unexpected shades of brown.

While working on two pieces of pastel to experience these three aspects, I could not help but see the correlations between what enlivens colors and what enlivens our souls. Warmer and cooler environments and interactions came to my mind, where sympathies and antipathies test our capacity to develop sympathy and equanimity. As individuals, we may also experience times when we focus more in our thinking, the cooler pole, or in our doing, our warmer pole, giving us opportunity to search for balance through feeling. Our soul is certainly not flat when we talk about light and darkness. We may have a hard time accepting either of these extremes in us, our most and least developed sides. However, these aspects are very alive inviting us for transformation at all times. Lastly, complementary colors in our soul life may relate to our daring to try new attitudes, to uncover buried feelings or challenge our thinking.



When we apply all these aspects of color to an art piece, what we experience is a truly immaterial brightness; the light colors shine through, inviting the spirit into the painting. An example of such a result we experience regularly at the Spring Valley church through the altar painting. When we work on all these aspects of our soul life, we can also be sure the being who shines in the altar painting will find a dwelling in our beings.

How do we do it? When working with colors as well as in our inner development, one suggestion is to do it patiently, in stages and with love.

Isabela Seabra

Destruction, Construction and the Praying Mantis

Could it happen again? Yes, and it did, but with a twist. Exactly a year ago we were hit with a major snowstorm. Many trees still bearing leaves were felled by the sheer weight of the massive wet snowfall and ice.

This time it was the wind of hurricane Sandy approaching from the East. Its speed sounded like a freight train barreling down on us, knocking down trees and power lines, crushing cars and roofs, making roads impassable. Once again most of Chestnut Ridge was left without power, except for a small area immediately around the church. Just before the arrival of the storm a praying mantis, late for this time of year, made an appearance on the doorstep of our newly purchased seminary building demonstrating, to the beholder the

gesture for which it received its name. Once the storm had passed and we could gratefully record no damage to the building, the praying mantis attached itself for days to one of the windowpanes, greeted by the observer upon raising the shade at dawn and before lowering it at night, hoping to find it still there in the morning.

Surely someone watched over us to secure our good fortune of finding a house for the seminary, just a short walk from the church, also bordering Threefold land. It is a two-story ranch house. It provides housing for the director upstairs and the downstairs has been renovated into classroom spaces, a library, an office and social area. Construction, as it often does, took longer than we expected, but we could still begin to live into our new home before the end of the semester.

Bastiaan Baan, our newly appointed seminary director, and his wife, Aeola, were to arrive from the Netherlands at the beginning of the semester, but unfortunately Homeland Security moves ever so slowly and the work visa was not issued in time. As a result, their household dissolved, all belongings already in a shipping container, they found themselves stranded and homeless at the beginning of September. In spite of this ordeal, Bastiaan and his wife are looking forward to joining us. Meanwhile, Bastiaan is teaching at the Stuttgart seminary till Christmas, and Dutch babies and mothers are a little longer blessed to have Aeola, who is an infant nurse, look after them. Every day we hope that the long awaited email from Homeland Security will finally arrive with the good news that a work visa has been granted.



We thank all our friends, who keep up our spirits with words of encouragement and appreciation. We thank all who have come to visit and join us for an Open Course. And we thank especially our donors who help us to maintain a healthy financial foundation for the work we do: helping workers to find their way into the vineyard of the Lord.

Remember, it is the many small gifts under the Christmas tree that make it look so magical. Thank you for considering a donation. Blessings for the Christmas season and best wishes for many inner star revelations in the coming New Year.

Gisela Wielki, Seminary Director

Spring 2013 Open Courses

The schedule for up and coming open courses will be available in January 2013. Check our website for details.



*Students' work in pastel during
Art Week.*



15 Margetts Road, Chestnut Ridge, NY 10952
Telephone: 212-877-0208
email - info@christiancommunityseminary.org
www.christiancommunityseminary.org

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