



NORTH AMERICAN SEMINARY NEWSLETTER  
SPRING 2014

***Where Is the Seminary?*** — BASTIAAN BAAN, SEMINARY DIRECTOR

When people ask me, “Where is the Seminary of the Christian Community in North America?” I cannot give a simple answer. On the one hand, the answer is easy: Near the church in Spring Valley, NY, is a large house where we receive teachers, students, and guests, though this year the building was used only for Open Courses and as a home for my wife and me. However, the answer is actually much more complicated. For many weeks the Seminary building stood empty because I was visiting other congregations in North America, and my wife too was away some of the time. But the Seminary could be found in New York and Boston, in Hillsdale and Ghent, in Devon and Kimberton, in Washington, Denver, Sacramento, Santa Rosa, San Francisco, Chicago and Ferndale. . .

During many of these weeks, I journeyed alone and experienced a wonderful mixture of feeling at once both arriving and at home. Although each congregation is completely different—even something like another planet!—the altar is the one and only place where one can feel completely at home. The further I traveled, the more powerful this experience became. I had to develop flexibility in changing circumstances, trying to adapt to each congregation with its unique qualities, trying to listen to what was hidden in the words and questions of the many people whom I met. On other visits, my wife Æola traveled with me so that we could share our questions and impressions. But on all these occasions, the Seminary itself somehow traveled with me. It is a being in and of itself. It helps me to express what it is and what it needs.

So—Where is the Seminary? During the past year, I have had the unique opportunity to discover that it is alive and developing, even without students.

I wonder what will happen this summer, when I will lecture and teach in Europe and Australia. Will the Seminary travel with me overseas and to the other side of the earth, or will it enjoy a quiet vacation in Spring Valley? Beginning in September, life will be entirely different for the Seminary and its teachers. A new semester is already prepared. During the travels of the past year, groups of future students gathered from all over America. They will work and live intensively together—not yet knowing one another—from September to December, and perhaps even much longer.

Nobody knows what will happen in the future, but somehow I feel a deep trust that the Seminary itself will take care of all of us. The future is already here. ❖

## ***Aging: A Developmental Perspective*** — JENNIFER DOWNS

*Life and death are two closed boxes; one contains the key to the other.* – Italian proverb

When I saw the flier about the open course called “Aging: A Developmental Perspective,” I knew I had to be there. As a “young elder” (as I think of myself at 62), I am aware of the richness in life that becomes more accessible from the vantage point of years.

It was an extraordinary five days, the schedule beautifully interweaving the morning Act of Consecration of Man, shared meals, rich conversation led by Bastiaan Baan and Hans van Delden, restful afternoons, and intriguing evening lectures.

John of the Gospel was nearly a hundred years old when he captured his experience of the story of Jesus in words. “It was the fruit of a whole life of meditation,” said Bastiaan Baan. Bastiaan shared an image of John as an old man, looking off to the side as he speaks the words of the gospel to a young scribe. The story goes that when John uttered the first word, the scribe was literally knocked over onto the floor.

We explored the mystery that life-experiences can come to ripening as we grow older. Rudolf Steiner emphasized the need to cultivate an “expectant mood.” Those older people who achieve that state appear “chubby-cheeked,” as if returning to the innocent awe of the young child.

The story of John of the Gospel demonstrates the importance of the backward glance at our life-story. Indeed, each of us has a unique place in the tapestry of things. The exploration of the meaning of the lives of older men and women in the Bible helped us to appreciate the importance of listening well and attending to our elders, and to the relationship between generations.

Hans van Delden, a physician with many years’ experience helping older people, brought a wonderful practical frame of reference to our exploration, including an exercise of imagining what would constitute an ideal nursing home, and giving us time to write our own advance directive. I feel inspired to delve deeper into my own inner work and have a renewed appreciation for elders and our alchemical relationships as a tapestry of generations.



Hans Delden



My own mother has dementia. I have felt a unique opportunity in this phase of her life and in my relationship to her. The course affirmed this. I am grateful to the course leaders and the Christian Community Seminary for providing this opportunity in such a warm and loving atmosphere. ❖

### ***Engaged Listening, Clear Viewing, and Inner Balance as Priestly Qualities*** — STEVE BRANNON

“What is the most important work of the priest? And what qualities are most important for the priest to embody?” With these questions, a group of nearly thirty participants embarked on a weekend-long exploration of the elements of modern priesthood in Hillsdale, NY. After some discussion, Bastiaan Baan gradually guided us to three central aspects of the priest’s work: celebration of the sacraments, proclamation of the word, and caring for souls.

It was noted that, with the exception of seasonally included epistles and inserts, the words and gestures of the Act of Consecration of Man remain the same from service to service. How then, despite their somewhat “static” nature, do the sacraments remain dynamic and alive with each celebration? Here the priest is called to cultivate an awareness of, and collaborate with, more subtle aspects, such as the day of the week, the particular constellation of congregants present, and even the “objective mood” of the spiritual world at that time. Here, silence and receptivity are paramount.



A window in the Hillsdale chapel

This quality of engaged listening extends also to the realm of soul-care. During the Sacrament of Consultation, for example, the priest's silent yet active engagement can help us to hear our own "ego" as we strive for self-knowledge and clarity. These virtues alone, however, are insufficient to the proper proclamation of the Word. As hosting priest Liza Marcato made clear, "The priest must be fully present and with something to say." This necessity is reflected in the sermon, which, as an extension of the gospel reading, is delivered while facing the congregation. Here, as was formulated by one of the conference participants, we "witness the meditation of the priest" who, having wrestled in thought with the content of the gospels, shares with us the fruits of his or her deliberation.

For this to occur, the priest must not only be able to form clear views of the outer world, but also of their spiritual counterparts. From this vantage point, the priest can help individuals and communities contextualize life from a larger, spiritual perspective while learning to navigate the inevitable hardships encountered during life.

In all of this, a practice of regular and rhythmic prayer and meditation must be cultivated. Only from this starting-point does the possibility arise for the priest to carry his or her community capably. Amidst the scattering, destructive forces of the world, the priest builds up a center within the self—all the while striving to be in complete harmony



Course participants in Hillsdale

with his or her self and the spiritual world. Balance is sought between knowing when to open oneself to the world and others and, conversely, when to close oneself off for meditation and self-development.

By the end of the weekend it was clear that, whether one's intention is to find the "priestly" in everyday life or to pursue the priesthood as a vocation, the requisite strivings of the priest as a "becoming one" are equally applicable. Real interest was generated for what is to come when the Seminary of North America resumes class under the warm and knowledgeable guidance of Bastiaan Baan this coming fall. ❖

April marks my eleventh month in Germany. As my practicum at the community in Überlingen draws to a close, I find myself asking, What have I encountered in this small German town and large Christian Community? Where is my home in all of this?

To begin by stating the obvious, things are different here. The Christian Community in Germany is like a family member I am meeting for the first time. In this family, I am part of the CC in the US, and we are the little sister, and the CC in Germany is the older brother I always knew I had but was apprehensive to meet. I had heard so many things about him, things about his past, his culture, and the language he speaks. It was so different from my life, my experiences, that I could hardly imagine our ever meeting and getting along. But last year the time came for us to meet; we are family, after all.

When I first arrived and we met, I was a bit lost. I could understand a few of the words he said, but what he really meant was beyond me. My first steps were clear: Take every opportunity to learn the language, and pay attention! I started carefully observing everything he did, and here are a few things I began to notice:

He loves tradition and ritual.

*Exhibit A: A candle and flowers on the table are a must. If we are meeting, the candle should be lit.*

*Exhibit B: He has a repertoire of what seem to be a thousand songs, can sing them in multiple parts, and will sing them when the opportunity arises. Said opportunity arises frequently.*

He claims apple juice is not just for children.

Vegetables are served with a sauce.

We should shake hands each time we see each other, address each other by our last names, and use the formal Sie form until a magical moment when he says we can use the informal du.



Emma with the Überlingen priests: Georg Schaar, Johanna Taraba, Ilse Wellershoff-Schuur, Emma Heirman, Helmut Voigt, Frank Peschel

There is a right way to clean and a wrong way to clean.

The value of family is paramount.

If there is cause to celebrate, he will make sure there is a well-thought-out festival to accompany the celebration. (Note: There is almost always cause to celebrate.)

He takes his afternoon break seriously, and for good reason. Lie down for half an hour and you will be a better person because of it.

Coffee and cake in the afternoon might be a law here.

He has so many brothers and sisters, I will never learn all their names, and wow, I never knew our family was so big!

These observations were essential for the beginning of our relationship. Once my German improved, I could ask him questions about his life, what his childhood was like, what he thinks about the sacraments and the future of the Christian Community, etc. He asked me about myself too, things like, what is the DC in Washington DC stand for, what is the Christian Community like in America, and do you put ketchup on your vegetables? I would answer as best I could, braving my language skills despite the fact that it felt like I was chewing woodchips. He was the big brother, and I knew there was a lot I could learn from him. At the same time, it was clear how different our lives are, that we are at different stages in our biographies, and though the same mother and father gave us our lives, how they blossom and unfold is completely up to us.



Emma with a friend on Fasching, Überlingen Carnival

Through all our differences, we have found things in common. We love to come together in the kitchen, to laugh around a table, to make something beautiful, and not to hurry through the time we have together. We love plays-on-words, the brilliant things the kids come up with in religious instruction, and a well-ironed vestment. And above all, we love our family.

If I am a bit tongue in cheek, it is because humor is the most important tool I have had on this journey, and I have repeatedly underestimated its power and importance in all that we do. When there are communication breakdowns, misunderstandings, or cultural differences, humor is a bridge we can cross to find understanding and compassion, or sometimes just a bit of fresh air. If the little sister can laugh at herself and the big brother at himself, then we can laugh a bit at each other, bring warmth to the mistakes we make, and move on.

But the question about home, where is my home in all of this—that one is trickier. It is trickier because it is so obvious and yet so difficult to remember, to feel,



View of the Bodensee

and to practice. In 2005, David Foster Wallace gave a commencement address to the graduating seniors at Kenyon College. This speech is now famous and can easily be found on the Internet, often titled "This Is Water." I listened to this speech again recently, and while every word of it is significant, the overall point touches exactly on my question of home. He begins with what he calls a standard requirement of US commencement speeches, a didactic little parable-ish story, and it goes like this: There are these two young fish swimming along and they happen to meet an older fish swimming the other way, who nods at them and says "Morning, boys. How's the water?" And the two young fish swim on for a bit, and then eventually one of them looks over at the other and goes "What the hell is water?"

Although Wallace then leaves the fish for most of his speech, he brings the reference back at the end: "The capital-T Truth ... is about the real value of a real education, which has almost nothing to do with knowledge, and everything to do with simple awareness; awareness of what is so real and essential, so hidden in plain sight all around us, all the time, that we have to keep reminding ourselves over and over: 'This is water. This is water.'"

I am so often like those fish swimming around, not knowing what water is. But if I can call Germany my brother, then I can certainly call Earth my home. This is home. This is home. And sometimes it doesn't need to be any more complicated than that. ❖

## ***A Course on the Priesthood*** — DENNIS WORKMAN

Eight of us just had the wonderful privilege of spending the weekend at the Christian Community in Devon, PA, learning about various aspects of the Movement for Religious Renewal, and particularly about its priesthood, with Rev. Bastiaan Baan. Rev. Baan heads the Seminary in Spring Valley, NY. He has been a priest for 33 years and was a Waldorf School teacher for seven years before that.

The course began on Friday evening with “Elements of Modern Priesthood.” We discussed the basic elements: celebrating, pastoral care, and proclaiming the Word. We went specifically into the questions What is blessing? and What is consecration? Rembrandt’s wonderful painting “Jacob Blesses His Grandchild” made these themes very concrete. We also looked at the world of the elements with which a priest works in the seven sacraments: What happens when these elements are consecrated?

On Saturday we began with the Act of Consecration of Man, and after breakfast we worked with speech-formation and singing. Rev. Baan also had singing lessons as a youth and worked with choirs for several years. In singing we developed a bit of a feel for the way the word is sung, and we proceeded into studying the use of meditation and prayer as background for the priest’s vocation. We worked particularly with the Prologue of the Gospel of John in the original Greek. In a short time, Rev. Baan already demonstrated some of the immense depth and power of this mantric language. One can believe that the scribe, on first hearing St. John voice these words, fell down, unable to move. We paired up and practiced “peripatetic philosophy,” discussing our experience of working with the Prologue language as we walked around the neighborhood. Some of us were amazed by the quality of our thoughts after only ten minutes of this surprisingly intense practice.



Rev. Baan with some of the course participants in Devon

In the afternoon we learned about the significance of the sacraments for not just humanity, but also for the earth. Rev. Baan pointed out that the Act of Consecration of Man mentions the word “earth” many times, which was not the case in the older forms of the sacrament. Christianity started with the priesthood of Peter, then with the Reformation came the priesthood of Paul, and now we have entered the priesthood of John, where healing and transforming the earth are new tasks. Later we studied the Gospel of John, particularly Chapter 11, dealing with the raising of Lazarus. Here the special relationship (“agape”) of Christ to Lazarus/John and the meaning of particularly this Gospel for modern priesthood was our subject. In the evening we were treated to portions of Rudolf Steiner’s Mystery Dramas by Glen Williamson and Laurie Portocarrero at Rose Hall, Camphill Kimberton Hills.

On Sunday morning, Rev. Baan and Rev. Nora Minassian led us in the Act of Consecration of Man. Next we discussed the question: Who is the Being of the Christian Community? No simple answer suffices, but we realized that a huge number of beings are involved, including those present, their “geniuses” or angels, the souls of the dead and of the soon-to-be-born, angelic beings who hold congregations, and others interested, such as St. John, members of hierarchies, including the Archangel Michael. On the final afternoon we dealt briefly with unanswered questions, such as What is Sacramental Consultation; different paths or missions of Anthroposophy as compared with the Christian Community; differences/similarities between meditation and prayer. Finally we considered the future of the movement, especially in what has been called the “Anthropocene” time (beginning with the last 250 years, when human activity causes the most change on earth), when nothing good seems to continue out of itself, but only with the directed effort of awakened human beings who can see what is needed and act out of love. ❖

## ***Emerging Priesthoods*** — COCO REINHART

Early April in Denver is a time of expectant silence. The crocuses have come and gone, but the other bulbs build our anticipation of spring, with emerging leaves and tightly closed budding blossoms. There is frequently snow on the ground in shady places, left over from fast-moving overnight snowstorms that come off the mountains and cover the Front Range of the Rocky Mountains in a heavy white blanket until about midday, when the high-altitude sun sends water pouring into gutters and rushing off the eaves. The grass is greening up, and one realizes that it is hard to be sure when it even became brown. That sun, a welcome-warmer in winter months, already has a touch of its oppressive summer heat in it. In one short week, spring will have arrived in full bloom, but this first weekend in April remains charged with the moment before, and one cannot help but direct one’s focus to what is next to come.

It was in this setting that a small group came together for a conference on the Priesthood, led by Rev. Bastiaan Baan with support from Rev. James Hindes. Our size echoed the picture of the Christian Community movement in Amer-

ica: small, but energized and steadfast. Each of us left the weekend with a deeper understanding of the Being of the Christian Community and the priest's relationship to this Being. We also walked away with great deal of material for further contemplation, and gratitude for so many fruitful exchanges with new friends.

During our time together we examined topics such as the tasks of the priest, the nature of contemporary priesthood, the meditative work of the priest, John the Baptist's relationship to this religious movement, and the evolution and future of the Christian Community. We sang, experienced the power of speaking John's Gospel in Greek, and shared stories of our individual paths to anthroposophy and the church over wonderful meals. In-between moments became as important as guided conversations! Rev. Baan shared many stories and images with those of us who, out of their meditative work and open relationship with the spiritual world, have been guided by the Christ and the many Beings who work in support of the Christian Community. Rev. Hindes filled our minds with the evolution of man and the priesthood and the poetry of the natural world.



A glimpse of the Denver course

As the weekend progressed, a theme began to emerge: Priesthood is not limited to becoming a priest. The qualities that are asked of the modern priest are those that we can all strive toward. Each of us can stand before the altar of life, allowing our own individuality to become a bearer of the spirit. We can prepare to stand before this altar by cultivating a meditative and prayer-life that connects us to our highest selves

and to those Beings whose destinies are interwoven with the fate of humanity. We can cultivate our capacities and ask ourselves "Where can I be used to do the most good?" We can order our physical lives so that the spiritual world can take hold of and enliven the dense matter that surrounds us. We can cultivate relationships that support others in discovering their own highest selves and in embracing their destinies with courage. We can refuse to be stagnant, and instead expect conscious evolution from ourselves and remember that others are capable of the same. We can bring something of the spiritual, of the substance of the Act of Consecration into our daily life. When the fruits of our labor are not readily apparent, we can cultivate faith, "the ability to see the spiritual through the physical," until the harvest is revealed to us. If each of us can strive to do even one of these things, then the Being of the Christian Community will no doubt walk beside us as we begin to meet the many challenges of our troubled world. And then, perhaps, before we know it, we will find each day beginning with the expectant silence of what is to become. ❖



Sign outside a NYC church

On the last weekend of March, seven boys and two girls jostled their way into vehicles driven by Rev. Liza Joy Marcato and me, and we all drove from Hillsdale, New York, to a confirmation retreat in New York City. Good humor, good appetites, and high expectations ruled as we began our adventure. Some confirmands had already spent part of the day in cars, as one of the boys had traveled down from Montreal, another from Burlington, Vermont, and a third from Pioneer Valley in Western Massachusetts—all affiliate congregations of the Taconic/Berkshire church.

We were greeted by Rev. Hugh Thornton from the Spring Valley congregation, who had brought a student with him to round out the number to ten. After eating some of

the massive casseroles that moms had sent, we got down to the business of getting to know one another and getting to know the story of Jesus Christ in a new way.

Over the years, the students have lived in the presence of Christ through participating in the children's service, hearing religious stories, and spending their daily lives with Christian adults. But they had never delved into the details of the mission and passion of Jesus Christ; never before had they experienced Christ in such a conscious way. This retreat was the beginning of their new experience of Christ, which when coupled with the sacrament of confirmation soon to come, can open a door to a conscious taking up of the Christian path.

Woven into their experience of the journey of Jesus Christ from Palm Sunday to Easter were afternoons of exploring the great city in which we were staying,

studying, and praying. It was here that, as Rev. Marcato observed in a sermon, we encountered the city, the garden, the temple, and the tomb.

The City: One of our first stops was Times Square. It was a powerful experience of material life, with massive billboards and multi-screen video advertisements on buildings stretching up to the sky. It shouted out its version of what life is about: This is how you should look, this is how you should dress, this is what you should be doing for entertainment. One could not help but feel awed by the color, motion, and size of its message.



The Garden: Central Park

The Garden: We walked the entire length of Central Park that day. Some say that it is the heart of Manhattan. Within the garden, paths flow and curve, plants live out their life-cycles of growth and decay, and people smile and breathe into a different rhythm of life. It stands in stark contrast to the orderly, level grid of streets and buildings that fan out from this garden center. Small beginnings of spring were present, a pleasing sight after the deep snows of the past winter.



Students in the subway



The City: Times Square

The Temple: The Cathedral of St. John the Divine was a quiet place to sit, ponder, and wonder after our long journey by foot. Although much younger, this cathedral called to mind the great churches of Europe. It is currently home to two great beings—massive phoenixes soaring among the rafters. They are enormous symbols of rebirth, for not only does a phoenix rise from its own ashes, but the materials with which they are constructed, different kinds of cast-off objects, are experiencing new life as well.

The Tomb: After hearing the story of Good Friday and Holy Saturday, we journeyed with Rev. Gisela Wielki to Ground Zero of the former World Trade Center. There in the footprints of the twin buildings were memorial fountains. Water flowed down the smooth sides of the enclosures, then flowed again deep into the centers of the footprints, vanishing from sight. Around the sides of the fountains, carved in stone, are the names of those who lost their lives in the tragedy. It was raining the entire time that we were there, and water streamed not only within the massive fountains, but also on the glistening stone, the pavements, and the students' hats and hoods. The new building, One World Trade Center, loomed nearby, its heights obscured by mist and clouds.

The retreat ended with a sharing of the Sunday service with Rev. Wielki and the New York City congregation. They had graciously allowed us to stay in their building during our four-day retreat, and they were pleased to have the company of the students at the Act of Consecration of Man and the gathering afterwards. Youth met maturity as conversation and pizza were enjoyed by all. ✦

**... And Home Again** — LISA HILDRETH

Warm greetings to you all. After 15 weeks in Forest Row, England, and many helpful experiences, I have returned to the United States to continue my learning journey. This time I am working much closer to home in the Taconic/ Berkshire congregation in Hillsdale, New York, under the care of Revs. Liza Joy Marcato and Franziska Hesse.

England was an amazing place, and I look forward to future visits, but as the saying goes, "There's no place like home." I once lived minutes away from Hillsdale, with my husband and young sons, in Great Barrington, Massachusetts. I first attended the Act of Consecration of Man in the original small chapel (converted from a garage) here at this very congregation. This internship is a return to a place and a group of people with whom I have deep connections.

As I have traveled, I have met many readers of this Seminary Newsletter; the good wishes and hope that you have showered upon me are most appreciated! When you tread this path toward priesthood, you are constantly challenged to grow and become. This transformation takes not only the efforts of the student and teachers, but also the help of the larger Christian Community and the beings with whom we all work. Many times your warmth, hope, and trust in me have given me the courage to journey a little farther on this amazing path. ❖



Lisa at the doors of the Hillsdale chapel

# ***A New Step Toward Financing the Priest Training***

— BASTIAAN BAAN

After a year during which we enrolled no new students, it is amazing to see that the Seminary gained a small profit instead of the expected loss. All the usual expenses—for building maintenance, a stipend for the Seminary director, taxes, and other regular costs—continued while there was no income from the tuition of students.

Last year our support came not only, as before, from gifts and Open Courses, but also from lectures, conferences, and orientation-courses held in thirteen cities across North America. And the result is a positive balance!

As a next step in our financial situation, we would like to create a fund to help students pay their Seminary tuition. During the orientation courses we met several young people who are ready to attend the Seminary but who are not able to pay full tuition. Situations like these ask for our help. Our most important task now is to find and prepare enough students who will eventually become priests in the Christian Community. If you want to make a special contribution for this purpose, please mark your check "Tuition Fund."

Kindly use the enclosed envelope for your check, payable to: Seminary of the Christian Community.

Thank you for your support! ✧

## ***Seminary Fall Semester 2014***

Week of September 15 • *Spiritual Hygiene: Finding Our Inner Sources* - Bastiaan Baan

Week of September 22 • *Places of Ancient Initiation: Greece, Germany, Ireland*  
**OPEN COURSE** with Julia Polter and Bastiaan Baan

Week of September 29 • *The Act of Consecration of Man* with Bastiaan Baan

Week of October 6 • *Philosophy of Freedom I* with James Hindes

Week of October 13 • *The Creed* with Patrick Kennedy

Week of October 20 • *Christ and the Earth* with Daniel Hafner

Week of October 27 • *Genesis* with Daniel Hafner

Week of November 3 • *Spacial Dynamics* with Will Crane

Week of November 10 • *Philosophy of Freedom II* with James Hindes

Week of November 17 • *Old and New Testaments* with Oliver Steinrueck

Week of November 24 • *Old and New Initiation*, **OPEN COURSE** with Bastiaan Baan

Week of December 1 • *The Mission of Wonder* with Richard Dancy

Week of December 8 • *Prayer and Meditation* with Bastiaan Baan

Week of December 12 • End of the semester

With ongoing courses including *Christianity as Mystical Fact* (Rudolf Steiner), the Gospel of Luke, the June Course (Rudolf Steiner), The World of Things, The Sacraments, Greek, Gardening, Singing, Speech, and Eurythmy

**Fall Semester Begins September 14, 2014**  
**Applications are due August 1**

For application forms, visit  
[www.christiancommunityseminary.org](http://www.christiancommunityseminary.org)  
Page: Training; download Application.pdf  
Tuition for the fall semester: \$3,900 (includes housing)

**Fall 2014 Open Courses**

September 22–26  
*Places of Ancient Initiation: Greece, Germany, Ireland*  
with Julia Polter and Bastiaan Baan

November 24–28  
*Old and New Initiation* with Bastiaan Baan

For Open Course registration, visit  
[www.christiancommunityseminary.org](http://www.christiancommunityseminary.org)  
Page: Open Courses & Retreats

**DONATIONS ARE VERY WELCOME.**

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