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*The deadline for submission of articles for the next issue is **Wednesday 2nd August 2006***

Upcoming Events

4th – 6th June: **Whitsun Conference in Auckland.**

9th - 12th July: **The Priesthood of Melchizedek**, The Place of Wisdom Seminar Series 2006, Adelaide.

28th August – 1st September: **Australian New Zealand Synod** in Auckland.

Changes in our Region

Dear members and friends of our Communities in Australia and New Zealand,

I would like to give you an update about recent developments of our work here in our region. In March we had our Australian New Zealand Synod in Melbourne. For the first time we could welcome Martin Wittchow in our midst who had arrived last year in September in Hawkes Bay/New Zealand to continue the work of Elke Baublies. He fitted very well into our circle. We were not only able to work together in a very concentrated way, but we also did some singing and social exercises and had many laughs together. We had the best synod in years and could unanimously make some far-reaching decisions which now have been acknowledged and supported by the members of the Circle of Seven in Berlin. These decisions affect every priest in our region and therefore also all of our communities.

First of all I would like to thank Rosalind Pecover for her tireless, pioneering work in Western Australia and Queensland. Since 1988 Rosalind has been visiting our Perth community with increasing frequency and since 1992 she has also been going to Queensland up to three times per year. Answering the call for the sacraments, she cared for these filial congregations as well as for the community in Sydney. She has now decided to pass on these responsibilities to Martin Samson and Cheryl Nekvapil so that she can focus more on her work in Sydney and the very demanding building project of the church. Martin will in the future be responsible for our work in Perth and Cheryl for our work in Queensland. Thank you to Rosalind for having carried the pioneering work in this country for such a long time across these vast distances. And thank you also to Cheryl and Martin for taking on these wonderful tasks of visiting Queensland and Western Australia.

Since her ordination in Canberra in 2002 Cheryl has been in Canberra and travelled to work in Sydney when Rosalind was absent for one of her journeys. In the future Rosalind will have to travel much less which means that Cheryl will no longer go on a regular basis to Sydney. I would like to thank Cheryl for her work there over the last four years. Now she can concentrate more on the community life in Canberra.

Since Easter 2005 the working situation of Erin Ketel in New Zealand has been under review. Erin has now come to the decision to ask for leave from active work within The Christian Community. For the time being Erin will pursue other possibilities of work so that he can have more time and space to address different areas of his personal life and development. The members of the synod all supported him in his decision. We thanked him for his work in the past and expressed our hope that some time in the future Erin will be able to return to his priestly calling.

Kevin Coffey has come back into active priestly work at the end of 2003 after having had a break of five years. He has had the responsibility for the work in Titirangi/Auckland and we have now asked Kevin to take on a new task. We would like him to work for the whole region taking on administrative responsibilities such as: the development and maintenance of a web-site for all our communities; the development of leaflets; visits to any community in the region that needs someone to fill in or help out for a few weeks. It will be great for any resident priest to have this possibility of calling at times upon Kevin's expertise and to ask him for a visit to work together or to be a "locum". Until now we have not had this possibility readily available but we hope that in the future Kevin will be able to make a difference for all of us in our respective communities. If you want to get to know him feel free to contact him on the web-site which he has set up for New Zealand on www.tcc.org.nz. He will answer within a day.

On the 28th of May we expect Ita and Taco Bay to arrive in Auckland and to stay there for one year. They have retired from their responsibilities overseas and offered to come to us and help out where needed. Many of you will remember them from former visits to our region. Taco and Ita have felt strongly connected with us for a long time. As the leader of The Christian Community, Taco had the responsibility for our region in the Circle of Seven. Since one of their daughters Francis is living with her family in Tauranga/NZ, it will be nice for Ita and Taco to be very close to their grand children while looking after the Auckland community. We warmly welcome both of them in our region and are looking forward to the contribution they will offer to Auckland and probably to many of us in other communities. For me personally, this means that I am no longer needed in Auckland and that I will return to Melbourne. From here I will continue to visit the Christchurch community. I enjoyed my short time in Auckland very much and I am sure that I will miss many whom I had the privilege to meet and get to know a bit better over the last few months. However, it will also be special to come back to the Melbourne community and my own home.

Lisa Devine has kept the home fires burning in Melbourne during my many absences over a critical period when we were renovating our church building. Her constancy has been much needed with all the movement otherwise across our region. She is carrying the work and responsibility for this community while I am coming home from time to time for some visits.

Over the last years we have been working on a new constitution in both countries. In Australia we have now come to a very successful conclusion of this work. Already last year we agreed on a new national constitution which incorporates a national body whose members are now protected by law. This national body can also own property and is now in the position to provide for the retirement of priests. At our last Council meeting in March, we could also finalise our work on the local constitutions which needed to be adjusted to become congruent with the national. This is a huge step forward in our organisation and the hope is that we are now free to move forward with our work in all our communities supported by a legal structure that guarantees free initiative and responsibility. At the same time we may feel encouraged to consult and support one another beyond our own community boundaries. A special thank you to Dilys Hannaford who has been holding and guiding this process that went over years and has now come to such a wonderful fruition.

For the coming year we expect Sune Nielsen and his family to come back to Australia. He was ordained on Sunday 12th March in Berlin and is now working for one year in Karlsruhe in Germany. It has not yet been decided where he will work in the future, but Sydney has been asking for another colleague and we hope that this will become possible in 2007.

With the warmest regards,

Hartmut Borries, Auckland

Christmas Down Under: A Wartime Recollection

(Continued from Previous Issue)

After our success the Christian groups of the camp had a full house too on the following Christmas Day. Everyone had been invited to their combined celebration. They sang German and English Christmas carols. The representatives of the Protestants, the Catholics, the Church of England and the Society of Friends gave brief addresses. Our quartet played Bach. The mess hut was transformed into a scented paradise through fresh branches of eucalyptus trees, the leaves of which glowed like blossoms in the candlelight. From everything one saw and heard there radiated an uplifting dignity which reflected itself in all those present.

My next Christmas in Australia in 1941 was quite different. By now we all had been scattered in various camps. I found myself in a camp whose inmates were chiefly political refugees who, after Hitler's invasion of Russia, no longer hid the fact that they were friends of the Soviet Union. Many things had happened in Europe, some news of which had filtered through to us at the end of the world. Many letters arriving from Europe were the same that the internees wrote almost a year ago to their relations in Germany or Austria. They had come back with the advice, "Addressee unknown", or "Removed to Poland". The new whereabouts were eventually traced, meaning Auschwitz, Belsen, Buchenwald, etc. I myself received news of the ban on the Christian Community by the Nazis, of the destruction of their altars and the arrest of its leader, Dr. Emil Bock, who was taken to a German concentration camp. After all this the prospect of spending Christmas without being able to celebrate it seemed to me less painful.

I was all the more surprised when shortly before Christmas one of our communist camp leaders told me of the wish of the camp to celebrate Christmas, and would I give an address, "of course without mentioning Jesus or the like". They wanted to celebrate Christmas but knew not how. I was struck by the deep longing of man for the spirit of Christmas which appeared to me as being inherent in all men of all nations throughout the ages. During Holy Night the gates between our camp compounds

remained open so that anyone who wished could take part in the Catholic Christmas Night Mass to be held in one of the compounds.

When I entered the mess hut in the neighbouring compound which now served as a chapel, I was almost blinded by a snow-white construction at the end of the hut which appeared to me as if woven of pure light. And in this dazzling light I discovered the altar whose tall burning candles made the white shine like gold. And as our fellow internee appeared in full festive vestments as the priest in front of the altar together with the server, an almost overwhelming dignity radiated from these two men in white. They now were no longer 'enemy aliens', they appeared like the image and likeness of the creator of man. It was as though their celebrating the birth of the Son of God was at the same time the celebration on the rebirth of man as a child of God. The presence of Australian Army officers had something deeply uniting; here they sat among us not as our guards but as our 'brothers in Christ'.

As I then after Mass stepped out into the pitch-dark night and saw the immense starry sky above me like a huge universal Christmas tree, the words sounded in me: "And the Light shineth in Darkness!". It was like a merging of the Midwinter Night with the equally starry Midsummer Night.

On Christmas Day an Australian Lutheran minister came to celebrate Christmas with us. Being of German origin he was happy to speak to us in German. In spite of the intense heat I followed his service attentively. To my surprise I felt no discord between the European and the Australian mood of Christmas. The Christmas stories of the Gospels mention nothing of winter or coldness. They fitted well into the Australian Midsummer. I had the impression that here one could experience Christmas much more as a universal festival which went far beyond earthly conditions and tradition. The Light that shineth in Darkness is not confined to earthly seasons.

While looking back on these experiences in Australian internment camps I had to think also of those camps in which at the same time countless people suffered much greater tragedies in Germany and Poland. And as I pondered over the difference between these camps there suddenly appeared before me the altar in our Australian camp and it seemed to me like an answer and a warning. The altar stands for divine proclamation, sacrifice, transubstantiation and blessing. Here man prays for the preservation of his divine being. Wherever the sublime and the divine is despised and degraded, the despising and degrading of man must be the inevitable consequence. There were no altars in Buchenwald, Belsen and Auschwitz. Was the emergence of these places of curse from the abyss perhaps the result of the destruction of the places of worship? Schiller's warning words still hold good for all times: "The dignity of man has been entrusted to your care, protect it! It will fall with you! With you it will be raised!"

Ernest Rathgeber

Golden Ash in Autumn

Tree of the Sun! On this autumnal morning your butter-leaf canopy is steadily dwindling. There are large gaps in your thinning crown and knobby twigs are becoming visible. They offer coal-hued tips to a chilled sky. What has withdrawn will later script the mournful gales of winter into a songbird echo. Come the spring, these hibernating buds will re-sound on a new note.

But for now Golden Ash of the Sun, as pale gold turns to caramelised brown a part of you subsides. The Apollonian might that courses through your sap has overtaken itself. Consumed by its smouldering flame, your leaves become a Sun-burnt offering to the Earth. From dust to dust, Ash to ashes...

Elisabeth Alington, Auckland, World Earth Day 22nd April 2006

Developing our Musical Movement

The Christian Community is a modern movement as every priest as an individual, and also of course every member, has

the freedom to believe and teach what he or she thinks to be appropriate – as far as therewith the continuation of the given Christian sacraments is supported.

Tasks – besides the sacramental deeds – have been dealt with by the priest or by a helpful community member. Music is one of these tasks, and a quite important one as the music and the songs are part of the atmosphere on a Sunday.

There are some stories of early Christian Community priests dealing with this situation, like the one of Doldinger, for a long time a priest in Freiburg in Germany. Before the service he played (improvised) the piano in long preludes until he found himself and the atmosphere prepared for the service. And it is told that he once lifted up a trombone from behind the pulpit, blowing into it to wake the community up – into a higher level of consciousness, of course! He was an artist and musician; he volunteered for and carried out many a task out of his natural gifts, being not a specialist but a gifted amateur filled with enthusiasm by his task and his study of anthroposophy.

Music during the sacraments has a serving nature; it is not a performance. And although many musical pieces in history were written for the services of (catholic or protestant) congregations, they mostly don't feel appropriate anymore. The nature of our service is different, and there has always been a striving to find music appropriate to this service. Musicians intimately at home in the Act of Consecration have contributed a new kind of music; there are names such as Reisch, Büchtger, Stolzenbach, Thiele, Reubke, Peter, Berger, Nickles, Giersch, Deij, Yoshida, Killian and many others. Their music is different from classical music, different from modern music, different from pop music. It is often music that is easy to play, but hard to grasp. And it is music not meant to be "the" music but one amongst many attempts to find a musical expression in a community or a country.

Often, community members who have never had an in-depth musical education will join in this task; or musicians who have had a musical education but no real experience or understanding of the unique service in The Christian Community may be asked to do it. But all are on the way, on *their* way.

There is no special preparation for this task, no recognized education – and we have to be amateurs; that means: people who strive to fulfil a task without a proper education. That does not mean that to play an instrument very well, to have a musical education or to understand and experience the service very deeply would be no help. These things are indeed a help, as long as they do not prevent a change of attitude for the new task.

On the other hand, our movement in general does not want specialists who do everything. Tasks are a matter of community; every specialist works for and with the community and probably should tend to make him/herself superfluous. It is the journey of the community from entering the chapel to the communion and then carrying Christ into the world. The community – led by the servers as their representatives – come to prayer; the community also – led by the musicians as their representatives - receive impulses for songs and enter a listening space for the community.

Servers often have a handbook to help them remember the right cues for their task. Musicians *hopefully* know the right moment to start a musical piece or song, yet there are many more questions to be answered, requiring much more preparation and ability than serving: What is the right pace, the right intonation, the right connection to the service (where do we come from, where do we lead to?), the right way to support the singing community.

In order to learn this task, it can be very useful to share our experiences, feelings and observations with others, to study what we are doing, to get a mirror from "outside", and thus to grow through sharing the diverse ways we are travelling. A conference would be a great way of enabling us all to share in this way.

Please show your interest in this idea by responding to Wolfgang Devine PO.Box 413 Hawthorn BC; VIC 3122:

Australia – lisa.devine@bigpond.com. Please send some songs from your community that may be unique and new, a list of instruments (and players) you have for your music and the kind of music you prefer to play. Thank you.

Depending on your interest, we will try to find a place and time for a meeting, either separately or in connection with a future Conference of The Christian Community.

Wolfgang Devine, Melbourne

Ordination in Berlin

Cheryl Nekvapil

It was snowing on Sunday morning 12th March as we walked from the Berlin Underground to The Christian Community Church in Wilmersdorf in former West Berlin. There was the church – it really is as big and impressive as its reputation says!

Within the hour, I sat amidst two hundred other priests of The Christian Community, in vestments, right behind Sune Nielsen, who was seated with 7 other ordinands before the altar. There were about 600 people sitting behind us in this grand sacred space.. Quietness fell inside like the softly falling snow outside, and then! trombones, violins – a small orchestra and organ filled the air with considered exultation. Then the Sacrament of Ordination commenced, and proceeded to fulfil the promise of the architecture, the music, the expectation of the crowd of laity and priests gathered together. And at its close seven newly ordained priests walked out of the space to begin their new lives. This Ordination reverberates even as far as our congregations in that here I am telling you about it as a part of our global community experience, and in that one of those new priests might not stop walking until he reaches Australia.

Patrick Kennedy walked out still awaiting his Ordination in Chicago on 1st April. Anne Dundon, who is from Adelaide, tells us how that event unfolded:

Ordination in the USA Heartland

It was 9.45 am, Saturday April 1st, 2006. The Christian Community Chapel here in Chicago was filled with members and friends from near and far. The sense of anticipation was tangibly present and people, both friends and strangers, greeted one another warmly, excitedly. We were about to participate in the Sacrament of Ordination of Patrick Kennedy. For most of us present it was to be the very first experience of an Ordination within the Christian Community.

It was 9:50. From the vicinity of the altar an extraordinary quality of silence streamed towards us; as it waned and washed its way towards us we responded; it gathered us as one into a Silence that was deep, permeating us for ten or so minutes. The evening before Julia Polter (Boston Community Priest) had spoken openly with us of the journey towards priestly ordination out of her own experience. She had also brought us to remember the priestly nature in us all, to sense in a living way the invitation to stand within and live from that priestly quality of soul in our individual life journeys. This was indeed to be a celebration of Ordained priesthood, yet through this experience each of us might well be brought to a new 'place'. Richard Dancey (Chicago Community Priest) had also brought to our awareness the 'phases' through which the Sacrament of Ordination would unfold within the Act of Consecration of Man. We were prepared. But we could not yet comprehend just how deeply and fully we would each be touched, moved and gifted by what was about to take place.

Outside it was an overcast Spring Day in Chicago. The outer, physical sun had not been all that visible during the week. But there in the Chapel, in a more inward way that also had an out-flowing quality, we sensed the Sun Being's presence.

As Vicky Von Behr (Erzoberlenker of the Christian Community) along with several priests from Germany and almost all The Christian Community Priests who work in the USA, entered with Patrick, we too gave ourselves to this sacramental journey. And, richly encircled, Patrick gave himself to ordained priesthood.

Love wove through light... that is how it seemed, as a palpable, concentrated presence arose from within the assembled community even as it streamed towards us from the world of Spirit.

Here in the heartland of Chicago, not far from the shores of Lake Michigan, we quietly sensed beyond words that, out of the breadth and depth of this Sacramental 'moment', much blessing flowed towards us, but also that it could flow from and through us into the world.

Through Patrick's willingness to come to Chicago for a 'homeland' ordination, along with Vicky Von Behr's commitment to celebrate the Sacrament of Ordination here, very significant births could take place. Yes, it was especially a significant birth for Patrick as he lived the ritual enfolded by the Priest Circle; yet it was also a birthing of something new for the members & friends of the Christian Community here in the USA.

As well, in a sense the grace and privilege of 'midwifery' had been offered to each one of us who were present. It was fitting that on the following day we were given the opportunity to reflect through Vicky Von Behr's insight on Ordination and the Task of the Congregation.

We celebrated well here all weekend in Chicago; through the efforts of people in the Community, we shared a meal, one of the best brunches I have ever tasted! That was followed by the opportunity to be present at The After Image of the Ordination and later, other group conversations. And on Saturday evening we shared in a marvelous evening of exquisite musical celebration along with a great dose of very good comedy.

Many people stayed until Monday to be present at Patrick's first celebration of The Act of Consecration of Man.

For we four students here at the Chicago Seminary, Michael, Rafal, Jonah & myself, it has been - as you might imagine - a time of grace. It gave us the opportunity to work with one another as well as other members of the local community to prepare for the event. It brought to us some of the priests and seminary students from Germany. It brought Patrick and Kate to our community here in this very significant time of their shared lives. It brought Vicky Von Behr and Barbara to stay with us for a couple of weeks and the opportunity to meet with Vicky. And especially, very profoundly, the gift of the Sacrament of Ordination itself has 'visited' us, entered into us, and continues to work on in us.

Anne Dundon, Student at the Chicago Seminary

A Long-Term Plan

In 1933, Adolf Hitler came to power in Germany. The Christian Community had been in existence for several years and a Jewish woman who had been converted to Christianity at an early age and was a Member of The Christian Community, gave birth to a daughter.

By 1937, times had become very difficult for Jewish people; they were not allowed to continue in their chosen careers, but had to take on menial work if they could get it. The woman was asked to remove her child from the kindergarten. At about this time Rev. Emil Bock, a Priest in the Berlin Congregation, strongly advised her to leave Germany. Her family and friends didn't believe this madness in the political field would last and encouraged her to stay. She took notice of her priest and tried to emigrate to France, Belgium and Holland, but no luck (of course all these places were later occupied by the Nazis). Try England - impossible - the weather! But a friend of a friend was prepared to sponsor her and her child. Now she had to get there. It was a catch 22 - "we want you Jews out of Germany, but you can't take any money out of your bank accounts, neither can you go to a restaurant, theatre or sit in the park, you are a non person" therefore how was she going to buy a ticket? She had no bank account anyway.

A gentile friend took her on in Berlin as a domestic help and gave her accommodation. Her daughter was looked after by an elderly couple who didn't want their neighbours to ask why they had suddenly 'acquired' a child. No one trusted anyone else anymore. "Quiet, quiet" was the ongoing message to the lively

5 year old. Still no ticket. Then Emil Bock informed the lady "a ticket has been bought for you and your child by a person who wishes to remain anonymous". So on 21st October 1938 - 10 days before the notorious 'Kristalnacht' (night of broken glass) when Jewish shops and houses were vandalised and burnt and books thrown onto bon fires in the streets - the lady and her child were able to sail to freedom. The Nazis on board cheated her out of her last few marks, and so with a child, a cabin trunk, a hat in a hat-box and a packet of cigarettes which she used to tip people who helped her with these, and very little English, she arrived in Southampton in England.

On 27th November 1988, 50 Years later, the five year old attended the Foundation Ceremony of The Christian Community in Australia and stayed to help with the work needed to establish the movement on this continent.

Maybe Emil Bock, who saved these 2 lives by his foresight, had long-term plans, and is looking down with satisfaction!

The hat-box now contains Christmas Nativity scenes and decorations for the tree. The Jewish lady lived to be 94 years old and her wish that her funeral be held by Rev. Rosalind Pecover, founding priest in Australia, was fulfilled.

Fay Dalton, Sydney

Editors' Note: *Have you got a story of your own to share telling how you or someone you know came to meet the Christian Community? What difference did it make in your life? How has your relationship to the Community changed and evolved over time? If you do have a story to share with us, we would love to publish it, please mail or email it to us (see the front of this newsletter for details).*

The Place of Wisdom

The first instalment of Martin's initiative called The Place of Wisdom was held over three days in the final week of the summer school holidays. Ten or twelve people listened, learned, asked questions of themselves and of Martin, participated in artistic and outdoor activities, ate, and generally imbibed of wisdom which was, after all, the point.

Martin began the process by showing a tantalizing sketch of many great philosophical, religious and spiritual moments throughout history. Here it is tempting to use the term Judeo-Christian history, but in fact it was much more than this. We reached as far back as the Vedas, the earliest oral histories which finally became recorded and codified as Hindu scripture. (We had lots of problems with the general movement of each stream which always ended in codification, and finally calcification). We met Abram and Moses on their evening walks into history and encountered the birth of Gautama, later known as the Buddha. The fruit of the Greek philosopher Aristotle (we also met his teacher Plato and pupil Alexander who made a splash) we later saw fermenting in North Africa and returning much later to fructify Europe through the Saracens. The Christ event seemed to be a seminal moment in this great scheme, but through Martin's grand design, we could really experience this moment (a masculine manifestation, lest that theme be omitted!) as part of a process (a feminine flow!). The life of Mohammed and the birth of Islam was an integral part of the scheme, bringing reason as a fulfillment to the Buddha's compassion and the love of Christ.

So where did it all go wrong, you ask??? Or did it? What is humanity's task? Can freewill really be achieved if everything is hunky-dory? (What is the Club of Rome and how are they active today?). So much to think about..... AND what's more, it all fitted neatly into a biographical picture, the macrocosmic scale of the human biographical development. (But that's too much to go into here).

I am one of those people who loathes the self-satisfied posturing which goes with preaching to the converted, so I was more than pleased that we had a couple of Buddhists among us. I would have liked a Muslim or two as well, but perhaps next time... Which brings us to the theme for the next 3-day gathering - The Priesthood of Melchizedek, scheduled for July 9th to 12th. So come along from near or far, it's worth it!

Maeve Archibald, Adelaide