



COMMUNITY VIEW – Advent 2006

Quarterly Publication of The Christian Community in Australia & New Zealand

Views, News & Communication

Editorial

Dear Readers,

Cheryl Nekvapil, editor of the 'ANZ News' asked me to take on editing and publishing, and to come up with something that would be a bit new – and not just a new name, but some new ideas and forms as well. Cheryl has been ably assisted by Tim Bourke. Very many thanks to you both.

The 'Community View' will appear four times a year at Advent, Easter, St John's tide and Michaelmas. The content will include a focus on complementing and providing a digest of what you can already find on our web site. There will be a three-layered view: The Christian Community around the world, around our region, and within a particular congregation. Thus the content in each issue ranges to sometimes include highlights from around the world, through to getting to know something of one of our Australian or New Zealand congregations. Your views and news as related to The Christian Community are most welcome!

In this issue ...

- **A Letter From The Regional Lenker: Rev. Hartmut Borries;**
- **Our Coming Regional Conference - Ascension In Melbourne;**
- **What Do Priests Do At A Synod?**
- **Introducing The Christian Community In Hastings, New Zealand;**
- **The Sacred Flame – Community Camp;**
- **Telling Our Stories – Connection To The Christian Community;**
- **Looking Back – A Remarkable Presence: A Tribute To Rev. Rosalind Pecover's Work In Perth.**

I trust you will be informed and interested as you read on. As you think of ways that 'Community View' could be improved, or if there is something you would like to see or have included in it, please contact me – thechristiancommunity@paradise.net.nz

This first issue includes thoughts from Sophie Aversbuj of Melbourne. She shares how she has experienced The Christian Community as an important fact in her life. If you are inspired by what Sophie has written, please write of your experiences and send them to me.

With best wishes for Advent and the coming joy of Christmas,

Kevin Coffey

A Letter From The Regional Lenker: Rev. Hartmut Borries

Dear Members and Friends in Australia and New Zealand,

Looking back on the year each one of us will have their own memories and events we treasure because they have helped us to grow and develop. To learn means to change, to grow older and hopefully in time, also wiser. As with each one of us, also our communities change and grow. When I was overseas to meet with the members of the circle of seven we discussed some changes in our region which I would like to tell you about.

This year has been a year of change. In 2006 Ita and Taco Bay arrived in Auckland at the end of May to stay for one year and Erin Ketel stopped working. In Western Australia, through periodic visits, Martin

Samson continues the work with the community that Rosalind Pecover has carried since the end of the 1980s! Similarly in Queensland which is now being visited by Cheryl Nekvapil.

For 2007, the priest circle came to the conclusion that when Taco and Ita Bay leave Auckland at the end of May, I will move from Melbourne to live and work in Auckland for at least two years. I will continue visiting other places like Christchurch and our Australian communities. Between Kevin Coffey and myself, we hope to be able to serve the needs and facilitate the growth and wellbeing of our Auckland community.

Lisa Devine is again preparing for an international **Red Earth Youth Conference**. This time it will be in Africa (in July 2007). From there they will continue to go to Dornach/Switzerland to take part in a youth conference which is being organised jointly by The Christian Community and the Anthroposophical Society.

Kevin Coffey will continue to visit the different communities in our region as well as to look after our website and to write leaflets and programmes. He will support priests and communities in the region whenever needed.

Both in Sydney and Melbourne, each community can look forward to the arrival of another colleague in September 2007. This means that in two communities in our region we will have two resident priests working together, and in Auckland two part time priests. This is a healthy development, since ideally priests should not work alone in one place.

Also the Circle of Seven has been changing. Cordelia Böttcher could retire because Anand Mandaiker joined the leadership of The Christian Community. Having grown up in India, one of his native languages is English. He has now taken on to represent our region in the circle of seven. Friedrich Schmidt-Hieber, with whom I have worked closely together over the last few years, and Anand Mandaiker both send their warm regards.

Before Ita Bay and Taco Bay return to Germany, we would like to have again a **Trans-Tasman Conference** together with them. Next year at Ascension (17-20 May), we will meet in Melbourne with the theme: **"The Alchemy of Leadership in Community Life"**. We hope that friends and members from all communities in our region will be able to meet and inspire one another while celebrating community at its best.

With the best wishes for the coming year,

Hartmut Borries

THE ALCHEMY OF LEADERSHIP IN COMMUNITY LIFE

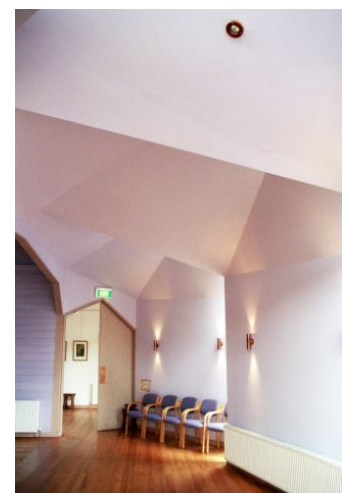
Australia-New Zealand Conference of The Christian Community To be held in Melbourne, ASCENSION, 17th – 20th May 2007

The Theme:

In an interview published in Perspectives in 2005, Taco Bay, the retiring Erzoberlenker of The Christian Community, spoke of the need and the challenge in our movement to have leadership strongly arising from congregations and members to complement the role of priests. As Taco and Ita Bay are working in Auckland for a year, and will be heading back to Europe at the end of May 2007, we have invited Taco Bay to speak to us on this subject before leaving our region. Ideas for another regional conference, following on from the success of those held in years past, have been brewing over recent years – so everything has come together in a perfect way. We have the opportunity to create an event where we can meet in person, in fellowship, in spirit, in deed!

Where Planning Is Up To:

Following our recent Australia Council Meeting in Melbourne, 17th – 19th November, the planning group is aiming to have a registration pamphlet available before Christmas to be distributed from each centre. The group will also be contacting congregations by letter (by mid-December), canvassing for workshops and short talks on the theme, calling for congregations to explore and present content, preferably from members as well as priests. The programme has been formed in outline as a guide and will be included in the correspondence.



Venue, Meals, Numbers, Cost:

The conference will be held over Ascension time in Melbourne. Our congregation there submitted a well thought out "tender", offering to host the event... The morning and evening programme will be held in The Christian Community Church in Auburn Road, Hawthorn, and afternoon workshops can be accommodated in nearby conference facilities. Meals will be catered for at the Church. Because of the size of the Church building, participant numbers at the conference are limited to 100 places only, and to be fair, a quota has been given to each congregation. By the end of February, if a quota is not filled in one community, those places will be given to other people on waiting lists in other communities.

The cost to register for the conference will be \$200/person, - except for Melbournites: \$225. Note that travel and accommodation costs *are not included* in this amount, though rooms will be booked as part of the registration process. There are a number of choices available. Requests for assistance with travel costs will be addressed on a fare subsidy basis.

Further information about these details will be included in the letter to congregations. **Contact your congregation's Management Committee or priest for those details or email Saralee Verco: thedeanery@bigpond.com, or Kevin Coffey: thechristiancommunity@paradise.net.nz or check the website: www.thechristiancommunity.net**

Plan to come! Register early when the pamphlets are out. This really is an opportunity to grasp!

What Do Priests Do At A Synod?



From left: Hartmut Borries, Rosalind Pecover, Martin Wittchow, Lisa Devine, Martin Samson, Ita Bay, Taco Bay, Cheryl Nekvapil, Kevin Coffey.

The picture on the left was taken at the last regional synod which was held in Auckland. The priests are all smiling. Priests don't always smile at synods, - but if they can smile for the end-of-synod photograph then it is reasonable to assume that it has been a good synod. This, like most synods, was a good one!

Let's look at what the priests do at their regional synods. They begin each day with celebrating the Act of Consecration of Man. This always comes first. Breakfast comes second! Then it's time to sit around the table and begin the conversations.

The conversations have a wide and wonderful range. But generally the day's work begins with contemplation and study of subjects less mundane than reports concerning working situations, or synchronizing diary entries. These also have to be looked at, but first it's down to the fundamentals of priestly existence and work – either work with the sacramental texts, or with the lectures that Rudolf Steiner specifically addressed to priests. In the course of the synod we also try to check and help each other with various aspects of our work at the altar. For instance, the various gestures in the rituals need a constant 'eye out' for and from each other.

Further morning work might take us to the guidelines that regulate our work together, peer review processes, professional development planning, event and work scheduling, and so on. In other words: All the things to which a group of professional workers need to be constantly attending.

Then we look at our actual work situations by focusing on all the communities throughout New Zealand and Australia. In the course of this 'tour' we may need to look at changes in work situations and responsibilities. An example of this was at our synod in Melbourne where we worked through the changes necessary concerning the visits to and responsibilities for Perth and Queensland. Of course, our individual work situations sometimes involve personal concerns which are also addressed as needed.

We get through a tremendous amount in a relatively short time, so it's essential that all the decisions that we make are minuted for future clarification and reference. We also commission each other to prepare papers on specific matters. These are normally concerned with administrative issues such as developing guidelines around setting stipends, peer review criteria, and so on.

Then there is the continuing and very interesting work applied to translation issues within the ritual texts. This is an essential and painstaking process which may never end! Not only do we have the on-going refinement of the English from the original German, but we have to consider the evolution of language itself! Although we may not be able to make final decisions regarding any changes to the English texts, our thoughts and recommendations are represented at the international translation meetings.

We generally work through until around 8.30pm at night and end the day with the short 'Close of Day' service – sometimes with a sermon. In the evenings we can each take the opportunity to present some area of study, interest or research that we might have been working on. This is often the place where we particularly look out into the world at new developments in areas that might have a bearing on our work.

Synods are an essential sustaining element in the working life of a priest. This is especially the case in Australia and New Zealand where we are so widely dispersed in our communities, and often working alone. Currently we manage to meet in synod twice each year – mostly in either Sydney or Melbourne so as to minimise travel costs.

Kevin Coffey

Introducing The Christian Community in Hastings, New Zealand

The picture on the right is of a scene which you might see as you drive along the main street of Hastings after 11am on a Sunday morning. For such a close-up view you would have to stop, park and come in the gate – and certainly be prepared for a cup of tea. As you can see, the local priest is not difficult to spot! His name is Martin Wittchow and he has the advantage of being able to cycle to work on account of living only two km. from the church – and of living in one of the flattest towns in New Zealand.



The Community in Hastings was founded in October 1989. The fine old historical home (named affectionately 'Rangimarie') had been purchased – along with its prime acre of land and trees, just prior to the founding. The purchase was possible through the generosity of many – notably Betty Poland, who sold her home and invested the funds in 'Rangimarie' in return for a life tenancy. Betty was thus able to keep a watchful eye on 'Rangimarie', and to ensure that a welcoming cup of tea was always on hand for the many who were always 'popping in'. Betty lived at 'Rangimarie' for over 14 years and was able to die in the home and within the community of which she had become so much a part.

Many other names stand out in the life and history of the Hastings community – some that go back to the late 1970s: Joce, Holger, Hanne, Alistair, Deirdre, Jim, Corrine, Martina, Margaret, Romilly, Marion, Liz, Grant, Cleone Sandra, Marion, Sally, Miriam, Pauline ... and on the list could go for several lines ... Five priests have served the community since 1989 – Kevin Coffey and Michael Tapp through the first nine years, Elke Baublies [the first resident priest], Erin Ketel visiting from time to time, and now resident, Martin Wittchow, with wife Ruth and children that defy counting (6✓). Martin, Ruth and family recently completed their first year in New Zealand.

Within New Zealand, the congregation in Hastings has been by far the busiest in terms of birth, deaths, marriages, and all the other comings and goings of human life around and within a congregation of The Christian Community. This belongs to Hastings being one of the two major towns in the area called Hawke's Bay. Since the 1940's there has been an unusually vigorous growth of work in connection with Rudolf Steiner's anthroposophical impulse ... Bio-dynamic farming, the Weleda centre, homes for special care needs, adult education, water flow research, and the first Waldorf school in NZ (founded in the 1950s), the Prometheus Bank, and much else! In this respect, Hastings is quite unusual.

In the picture below, we are looking forwards from the back of the property. Was this to be where a purpose built church would stand? Even though the chapel room inside the house has been far too small for years, current thoughts are not towards building a church at the back.. One idea is to maybe look at some retirement units as a kind of retirement community. But the chapel question still remains and might be solved through some internal building modification. Being a historical building, this isn't straightforward.

The current life of the community is becoming more stable after a long period of ups and downs. You can see from the programme (www.thechristiancommunity.net/Hastings.htm) that there is a good selection of activities being offered.



Martin Wittchow is away every month for just five days while he visits the Wellington community. Occasionally visiting priests appear. Recently Revs. Taco and Ita Bay held a weekend seminar on the subject of death and dying – attended by 25 people.

As a final word: Being the only one of all our established communities in Australia and New Zealand that is not in a large city area, the Hastings community expresses a way of being that is both charming and almost idyllic. There is a palpable family and country atmosphere which carries a warmth and closeness which is not so easily gained

in the midst of the hustle and bustle [and stresses and strains] of a city setting. The physical setting expresses this well in Hastings. Yet, at the most important human level, destiny is no less demanding for those who move within and form this congregation, than it is within each of our communities spread throughout these two magnificent lands.

Kevin Coffey

The Sacred Flame - Come and Kindle the Flame!

Community Camp January 3rd – 7th, 2007 at: Camp Longbeach Group Camp and Conference Centre

The summer Community Camps have become an important part of our community life. We work and learn together, play and explore the holiday place and swim together, share our stories and challenges and hopes, and gather in the Chapel. Most of us find a lot to do and it's a very active holiday with a difference. For five days we are immersed in the joys and demands of forming new community with people of all ages, at many levels experiencing that we are individual beings of spirit celebrating our common striving to bring Love and Life abundantly into the world.

Camp Longbeach is set amongst 25 acres of Spotted Gum and Burrawang forest, just 11 kilometers north of Bateman's Bay on the NSW South Coast. The camp is within 5 minutes walk from the beach.

COST: Single person: \$230/ concession \$190; family of 2: \$400; family of 3: \$510; family of 4: \$600; special rates for families with children 6 years and younger, and for families of 5 or more. Concessions available on request.

The Christian Community in Australia – Canberra Congregation

Contact Rev Cheryl Nekvapil ph 02 62953752, email: cherylnekvapil@yahoo.com

Telling Our Stories: How Has My Connection To The Christian Community Touched My Life?

This is the title of a meeting that was recently held in Melbourne. It is a good question for us all to ponder. If you have a response to this question that you would like to share in print – please send it to the editor by email. Here is what Sophie Aversbuj wrote ... [*Thank you Sophie!*] ...

I always knew I needed healing – although back then I thought I needed 'fixing' – and I spent my life searching for it. At 32 I found The Christian Community – but armed with anti-Christian conditioning I equated Christ with human invention and priesthood with a job.

Then I met a member, and she met me where I was at and answered my questions, and so I kept coming back each Sunday concentrating really hard, trying to memorize the words, sensing they held the key to what I'd been searching for.

How could I have guessed back then the journey that lay ahead – for the words led me to Germany, then blew me across to Chicago. I had to rediscover them in South America, and finally home again. All the while they were a constant in my life: healing me, changing me.

I don't try to memorize the words anymore; I just let them work on me. In less than five years they have taken me from anxiety to peace, from disconnection to community, from confusion to joy. The Christian Community has permeated my biography, totally transformed the way I see my past, the world, my life's purpose. It is sculpturing me. It gives me a space to grow into. It gives me an international community to feel a part of. It gives me the freedom to serve it.

Sophie Aversbuj (Nov 2006)

LOOKING BACK – A REMARKABLE PRESENCE

When Rosalind Pecover arrived in Perth for her first visit, she carried a chapel in her suitcases. Every object she needed to perform the sacraments was brought - from vestments for priests and servers, altar cloths and pictures, books, and even candle sticks. Rosalind's first visit to Perth was remarkable by anyone's standard. The last weekend in April 1988, two youngish people were married, a dozen or so children were baptized, an extraordinary number of talks were given, and servers (who'd never even seen a service) were trained.

Two separate venues were used. First, the wedding in an old federation house hired from the Quakers, followed the next day by the baptisms in what is now the Rainbow Kindergarten Room of the Perth Waldorf School. At that time the room was divided by an enormous immovable jarrah door and separately housed Classes 1 and 2. That meant that there were two complete classrooms to tear down and set up again over the weekend. The look on Rosalind's face when she saw the state of the space which needed to be transformed was never to be forgotten.

Perhaps the hardest work Rosalind had to do that trip was to convey to us that this visit was not a one-off visit, but that, in requesting the sacraments, we had opened something spiritually in Perth and had begun that long path to having a chapel, resident priest and The Christian Community established. Of course, Rosalind had said it many times before – in letters and over the phone, and to several different people – but once the sacraments had been held, the reality of what we had done settled around us and upon our shoulders. We later compared it to having children in that, no matter what was said in the way of preparation; the reality was only grasped when the child had arrived. An apt metaphor because in fact it was a birth, the birth of The Christian Community in Perth.

Rosalind's next visit was a year later. Another marriage, more baptisms, two different venues again and the ubiquitous preparation talks as well as a public talk or two and a festival. A jam-packed schedule with every one exhausted but somehow renewed at the end. The first Act of Consecration of Man was celebrated during this visit – in the Star Room of the Perth Waldorf School Kindergarten and later in the Cottesloe Civic Centre. Venues over the next years ranged from Nedlands to Claremont to South Lake to White Gum Valley, but the home offered by the Perth Waldorf School always was the most appreciated and fitting.

Over the years we acquired the necessary accoutrements, so Rosalind's suitcases could be filled with other items: books for our library and to sell. "Ah – is there someone who can do a bit of fundraising? If I bring across material, can someone make...? For the next visit, we'll need..." The prompts were always timely but never too demanding. And in this way Rosalind led us in the building up of the physical body of our organization – as much as could be done without an actual building as property. After a bit of hard work we had a fully operational vestry, vestments and altar.

As if on cue, 'the life body' of our community developed. The visits settled into a twice-yearly rhythm. The life of the community seemed healthy, varied and growing. We were joined by people from overseas, over East, and new local families, some older, some without children to balance the young community. As the community grew and diversified so did the activities. "I think we need a family camp..." or "You need to meet on Sundays at 10am to hold open the space for The Act of Consecration." Rosalind was in the lead, steps ahead of us always. And she didn't mind telling us off occasionally too, if we weren't quite in step.

Once or twice we had a visit from other priests, but Rosalind chose to carry the community alone. Over the years she married the lovers, baptized the children, confirmed the adolescents, listened to our troubles, helped us sort out our squabbles and buried our dead. And that wasn't all. Rosalind found us venues, gave workshops and did whatever needed doing. To say that the amount of work Rosalind did was enormous is a gross understatement.

Once Rosalind became involved with a family (or an individual) through the sacraments, the pastoral care really began. She maintained a deep interest and attempted contact each visit. Thus, with each visit the numbers grew and Rosalind's schedule became busier over the years.

And now, after having so carefully shepherded us for 19 years, Rosalind has decided to pass the staff to Martin Samson. The work in NSW, particularly the Sydney Community has grown too, and Rosalind needs to focus her attention there. And perhaps this is a moment in which the community too, can focus; a moment for looking back, seeing where we've been, taking the essence of what Rosalind brought and carrying this forward.

We are deeply indebted and deeply grateful for the work of Rosalind in Perth. We are also grateful for the support of the Sydney Community who shared Rosalind with us. As Rosalind's final visit is approaching [*Now passed - Ed.*], let us carry Rosalind in our hearts and minds for the endless exhaustive, fulfilling, renewing, creative pioneering she did with us, for us, around us and at times in spite of us.