



COMMUNITY VIEW

St John's tide 2008

QUARTERLY PUBLICATION OF THE CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY IN AUSTRALIA & NEW ZEALAND

EDITORIAL

Dear Readers,

More than ever, our times call for the courage to act independently and creatively out of insights and ideals gained from the moral-spiritual dimension of our existence. Whenever we succumb to dependence and forfeit our freedom, a price is normally eventually extracted. Thinking of the gathering oil crisis and the soaring price of petrol, we can ponder the apparent freedom and independence gained through our use of motor vehicles – and the looming consequences of any severe curtailment of their use. Friedrich Benesch's article in this issue interprets the mighty call of John the Baptist as: 'O Man, do not forget that you are seeking ideals, seeking spirit-reality! Do not forsake the idealism invested in the depths of your heart!' When we are faced with what appears to be a severe problem, we can wallow in the crisis of dependency or we can seize the opportunity to step beyond it and bring forth creative ideas and deeds that are expressive of ideals and thus able to act redemptively in our culture and in human destinies.

As the oil era looks as if it is gradually entering a final phase, we will have to weather a time of adjustment towards a new era. And so it is within evolutionary processes generally. Even within The Christian Community we can sometimes see what might have become familiar passing away even as something new arises. Change can become constant!

The Foundation Stone of the new church in Sydney has been laid. You can read about the event in this issue of Community View. The consecration of the church will take place in November. In the meantime community services and events continue, but in the midst of building site conditions. This is the time of readjustment as something new appears – and the culmination of many patient years of preparation.

In Adelaide an exciting and innovative community education initiative is about to start. You can read about the Melting Pot Learning Centre – as well as an introduction to The Christian Community in Adelaide – in this issue.

Across the continent in Perth, the St John's Tide festival period will open with a visit from priests Hartmut Borries (as Lenker), Kevin Coffey and

Martin Samson. Meetings will be held with the Community which focus on what is needed to make it possible for a priest to be resident in Perth. Hartmut and Martin will be in Perth for just three or four days for these meetings. Kevin will then hold services and events over a two week period.

In Hastings, New Zealand, the community has now heard that their resident priest Martin Wittchow will be returning to Germany in about six months. Following Martin's departure, the community in Hastings will be visited by priests resident in Auckland. This is a major adjustment for a community which has been served by a resident priest for over 12 years.

Change, readjustment, - and then something new appears. How much stronger it is when the new appearance comes forth from the creative initiative of individuals working with others to realise an ideal.

With very best wishes, - Kevin Coffey

A CONTEMPLATION - PREPARING THE WAY

Sometimes we hear the question: how can we imagine angels? An answer can simply be: consider someone who is truly and utterly selfless. There you have an angel. How can we imagine archangels? Imagine a being of pure truth. There you have an archangel. The angelic hierarchies are the reality behind our ideals. By the very fact that we seek and strive for ideals, we move our soul in the direction of the spiritual world. An ideal, a virtue, is in reality a being of the hierarchy of the thrones, of the cherubim or of the seraphim. In the divine-spiritual world our ideals are real manifestations. They reach into and work in human beings who incline their soul towards them.

John the Baptist essentially refers to this fact when he appeals to human consciousness: 'O Man, do not forget that you are seeking ideals, seeking spirit-reality! Do not forsake the idealism invested in the depths of your heart!' (Matthew 3) This is the Johannine *metanoite*: the reawakening which he wishes to call forth from within us.

When we truly seek to connect with the reality of an ideal, what are we doing? We are praying. Prayer is directed towards the divine world as a reality. Even though we might require ever so

many incarnations to come close to our ideals, to these heavenly beings, it nevertheless lies within our human nature to seek them.

Idealism carries the focus of hope and of looking forward to the future while being realistically grounded in the present. This is an inspiring aspect of John the Baptist. He is the living example of commitment to an ideal, where everything he says and does prepares the way for the ideal to come down to earth.

Friedrich Benesch

Dr. Friedrich Benesch (1907-1991) was a priest in The Christian Community and a leader of the Priest Seminary.

FOUNDATION STONE LAID IN SYDNEY

On Sunday, 24 February 2008, a long-awaited and much-longed-for event took place at our properties at 170 Beattie Street and 13 Evans Street, Balmain. This event was described as the Laying of the Foundation Stone for our new Church which for the last 19 years has lived in an embryonic form in our hearts and our thoughts but could not become a reality until we completed the purchase of 13 Evans Street, Balmain on Remembrance Day, 11 Nov. 1999.

The College Clothing Factory, as it was known for many decades, was acquired with a view to becoming our permanent chapel building when sufficient funds were available to undertake the task of renovating it. We, as members of the Sydney Congregation, have had to exercise two qualities, hope and patience, as it is now over eight years since the College Clothing Factory was acquired without our being able to commence the work of transforming it into a worthy vessel for the celebration of the sacraments and particularly the Act of Consecration.

Our founding priest, Reverend Rosalind Pecover, has shown unflinching determination to see this project come to fruition. In striving to realise this goal, Rosalind has been supported by members of the Sydney congregation and its Management Committee.

The laying of the Foundation Stone was intended to be not only a symbolic act but also one of expressing before the spiritual world, our gratitude that this vital project could at last be undertaken for the benefit of our congregation and for the many congregations that will succeed the present one.

We were blessed that the day selected, preceded as it had been by many weeks of rain, was a day when the sun shone brightly with no hint of rain. One sensed that the golden sunlight was matched by the warmth of our hearts. The event owed much to the devotion and care of Rosalind Pecover and David Bowden who have worked

together over a long time in preparing the ground for this special day. We are deeply grateful for this.



And so it was that at about 11.30am on Sunday, 24 February 2008, as we were passing through Passiontide, adults and children lined up to enter our chapel in the shed where, for so many years, services have been celebrated in a building thought to have a life expectancy of just a handful of years following the founding service on 27 November 1988.

In a mood of quiet reverence, coupled with a feeling of joy, adults and children set to the task of writing their names on parchment paper, using indelible black ink to ensure that the signatures did not fade. Sheets bearing the signatures of those present were to be rolled up and placed in the copper dodecahedron.

For all to see was a specially prepared table on which stood the 12-sided geometrical copper Foundation Stone surrounded by the 12 gemstones referred to in the book of the Revelation to St John and a handwritten copy of the creed of The Christian Community.



Theresa Carter read out a statement containing the thoughts written down on paper by members of the community over a long period of time and given to Theresa Carter and Alma Denton so that these thoughts, brought together as a written statement of intent, could be tied into a scroll and placed in the copper dodecahedron.

David Bowden spoke out the three-fold Rosicrucian verse in its Latin form and its English equivalent. Thus there rang forth through the chapel the following words filled with deep significance for humanity, namely:

ex deo nascimur (from God we are born)
in Christo morimur (in Christ we die);

and

per spiritum sanctum reviviscimus
(through the Holy Spirit we are given new life).

The paper upon which these words were written was also placed in the copper foundation stone.

There was also another document placed in the copper foundation stone – a brief account of the coming to Australia of The Christian Community written by John Shaw who, with Rosalind Pecover and John and Ruth Vieser, was an eye-witness to this event.

The proceedings in the chapel were rounded off by the singing of the 23rd Psalm led by Rose-Marie van Hoogstraten. Thus concluded the first part of this very special ceremony.

Those gathered then were led out of the chapel into the shell of the College Clothing Factory. It was fortunate that the morning was a sunny one as there was no roof to shield us from the elements had it been raining.

We assembled on the concrete slab facing the plinth where the Foundation Stone was to be placed into position.



John Shaw was handed the copper foundation stone by David Bowden and John then lowered it into the space prepared for it within the plinth.

In these moments it seemed as though we were supported by angels, archangels and other spiritual beings as shafts of sunlight illuminated the copper dodecahedron as it was being put into place. One could experience a kind of golden confidence-building presence during this ceremonial deed, so much so that one could say with conviction: “the Spirit will surely prevail

over all obstacles that we encounter on our earthly journey”. This was reinforced by the song which was then sung by those present, led again by Rose-Marie van Hoogstraten, namely “Thou Art the Way, the Truth, the Life ...”.

Reverend Sune Nielsen read a passage from the Book of Revelation to St John.

To conclude the Deed of this special day, Ian Neill, our architect, and Glyn Hubbard, the building foreman, set about the task of sealing the Foundation Stone.



The process of laying the Foundation Stone was completed by the sealing of the lid over the space where the Foundation Stone had been placed. It can be truly said that this deed marked the end of one phase of the Community's life in Australia and the beginning of a new era for our movement towards religious renewal.

We then left the building site of the new chapel and met together for a communal lunch.

On this day, those present participated in a deed which brought joy not only to the human witnesses but also to our Heavenly Guides and to the Being of Love Who serves us and Whom we aspire to serve.

Monika Bebb and John Shaw

THE CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY IN ADELAIDE

The Adelaide Community bought a beautiful old stone building in 1995. It was originally the stables for the Bridgewater bakery, which formed part of the overnight stop on the Adelaide to Melbourne coach run for Hobbs and Co. Over the years it was added on to and became a well loved Restaurant (The Stables) in the Adelaide hills. Bridgewater lies in the middle of the Adelaide Hills and the building sits on the banks of Cox creek. Cox was the first white settler in the hills and established a little tavern on the creek called

Coxtown. He arrived at this point (visible from our church) on Christmas Eve. We sometimes wonder if that also contributed to the building being called the stable, but that is probably a romantic projection. Coxtown (later Bridgewater) was well renowned as a place where people who were dwelling and working throughout the hills area gathered for community events.



When we bought the building it had been standing empty for about four years and was full of salt damp. We completely renovated the whole building and consecrated the church in February 1997. Many times we have felt the activities of the past warmly inspiring our community. In many ways 'the stable' is an apt name for our building. We love to sit around and talk, philosophize and share our stories together. It is often noted by both members and visitors that there is a warm friendliness in our community and a welcoming mood in the building.



In 2004 we had the great fortune that one of our community members, Jeremy Gray, left us a large estate and we were able to repay all of the generous loans we had received from communities around the world. These included Sydney and the North German region.

At present our community is developing ways to interact in an open and refreshing way with the broad Hills community. We are about to launch The Melting Pot learning centre which is introduced in the following article.

Martin Samson

THE MELTING POT LEARNING CENTRE

Recently a group of people were talking about how much they were enjoying their adult learning at University, how great it was to share knowledge and conversations with others, but also how expensive it was. As we pondered this we acknowledged that we certainly have many, many people in our community who have interesting passions and skills, and how wonderful it would be to create a forum that would allow this sharing of knowledge in an inexpensive, simple and friendly way. Some of us shared that they would like to go back to school and learn in the 'waldorf way'. Some of us realized that there were some things at school we never comprehended or mastered, and how wonderful it would be to transform that picture of ourselves that has stuck for life as not being artistic, or a knitter and sewer, or a number person.

We sat down and wrote a list of all the people we could think of who have wonderful skills or interests that were wide spread and in a few minutes we had a full page. Philosophical subjects, history, gardening, life matters, sculpture, candle decorating, fire-fighting, business matters, dreamwork, wet-on-wet painting, cooking, and the list goes on. We aim for a diverse range of subjects to appeal to people of all ages, and in all facets of life. And very importantly we want the venue to be warm, relaxed and aesthetic, conducive for warm, enjoyable and inspiring community learning and sharing. Therefore it may mean learning in a restaurant, in a garden, in church, a local hall or someone's home.

So what is the foundation of the 'The Melting Pot Learning Centre'? We want it to raise funds for church. We want to keep working on spiritual outreach. This doesn't mean getting people into the church (if that happened that would be a bonus) but through the nature of relationship. We believe that the common value that draws everyone to the Melting Pot is to learn, so if we provide community, warmth, generosity, connection, respect, we are bringing spirituality into education.

Of course, the paperwork is enormous with applications for tutors and applicants, insurance, grants and O.H.S & W; but doing the work with friends gets us through. We plan to run our first programme in 'Term 4' this year. Wish us luck!

Wendy Pryor
(on behalf of the Melting Pot Learning Centre Group.)

Please submit your articles, reports and comments to the editor: Kevin Coffey thechristiancommunity@paradise.net.nz