

REPORTS FROM THE REGIONS

EVENTS – FINANCES – FUTURE PLANS

NO. 89 MICHAELMAS 2020

no message from

Australia and New Zealand

Central Germany

Japan

Bavaria

Bavaria wishes everyone an inspiring and courageous Michaelmas. Our meeting of the Bavarian communities in preparation for the 2022 anniversary will be reported in the next information.

Dorothea Humérez

Central Europe

There is still great uncertainty in the region as to when and where meetings, synods or other events can take place, due to the ever-changing governmental regulations and border-closure regimes. Nevertheless, various summer camps and family gatherings took place, e.g. in Hungary, Slovakia and Romania; an Austrian youth camp was organised too.

For Slovenia, both the Act of Consecration of Man and the Confirmation texts have now been translated; for the first time in early October, both sacraments will be celebrated in the native language of the country.

The work in Slovakia had been greatly supported by an individual who, to everybody's surprise, passed over the threshold this summer in his 54th year. Thus, in August, our first Christian Community funeral was held – in Czech, as a translation is not yet available.

Christine Jost

Great Britain-Ireland

Throughout the lockdown, from late March until the end of June, the priests were celebrating regularly and members followed faithfully from afar. From the beginning of July, places of worship were permitted to open again. It was however forbidden to share out food and drink over which someone had spoken. At the end of July, the government guidelines for England were changed so that this is no longer prohibited, merely advised against. At the same time, the requirement to wear face coverings – initially a recommendation – was made mandatory. The priests have been trying to balance the need to comply with any legal restrictions with finding ways forward together with the congregations that seem appropriate to the circumstances in their local area. The sharing out of communion has been introduced carefully in some of the congregations.

Because the situation affects us in such an existential way, discussions about the facts of the public health emergency can be highly charged. Without even realising it, we may find ourselves belittling or dismissing a position that feels like a matter of life and death for our speaking-partner; for example, if we characterise the decision to self-isolate as giving in to fear, or if we describe

someone's decision to exercise their discretion within the restrictions as reckless. Behind all this are fears about what the crisis and the public health measures mean. In many conversations, I have experienced that these in turn stem from deeply held assumptions about the power of the state, the underlying factors that lead to illness and maintain good health, and our relationship with wider society.

In a church which prides itself on respecting freedom of belief and individual moral agency, we cannot expect that we will all hold the same opinion about any matter. Nor can we assume that each one of us will make the same decision about how to behave. Perhaps now more than ever, we are challenged to find ways of meeting each other that allow each individual to be heard, their worlds of experience felt and validated, and their moral choices respected. Rudolf Steiner, without whom The Christian Community would not have been founded, describes a path to the experience of Christ in similar terms: to think the thoughts of the other as if they were my own. This may at first seem obvious – don't we listen to each other all the time? But if we recall our experiences of group discussions, for example, we may be shocked to notice how often we are busy with our own thoughts as the other person is speaking. We may even be getting an answer ready in our minds, waiting restlessly for them to finish. Even when I do manage to listen and what the other person is saying to me, have I really felt the deeper meaning of their words? Have I felt the stirring of my own will to do something that I hadn't thought of before, as if these thoughts were truly mine? We can see in this work a kind of antidote to the thinking that informs the public health measures, which of necessity deal with human beings as statistical units. Only when we truly hear each other can we say that we are meeting not a generality but a unique, individual human being.

Selina Horn has accepted a new placement in the Forest Row congregation.

We decided to cancel this year's Annual Meeting. It is hard to know what the coming months will bring and our priority needs to be to build up the life of the congregations again. The priests are hoping that they will be able to meet for their synod in October.

Tom Ravetz

Netherlands and Flanders

Firstly, a positive message. In the city centre of Middelburg, the capital of the province of Zeeland, work is underway to build a chapel for the local congregation. It was on 30th June 1968, that for the first time a sacrament was celebrated in Zeeland by a priest of the Christian Community. It was the sacrament of baptism performed by priest Joost Nijkerk. Now, after more than 50 years, this congregation has its own chapel at last. For this purpose, a building in the city centre is being extensively renovated. It is hoped that the first Act of Consecration of Man will take place at Christmas. The postponed confirmations will take place in autumn in eight congregations, mainly during Michaelmas.

A working group is thinking about the upgrading of our website. The group has conducted a survey amongst the congregation to gather some more information with regards the wishes and ideas of the members about using the website.

In our region, a lot of thinking about our financial situation has been done and discussion entered on how a sustainable financial policy should look like. A working group has published a report, and the board of directors of the fund, which manages the priests' maintenance contributions, has also expressed its views. This will be discussed several times in the coming months in order to arrive at a jointly supported vision and policy.

Ellis Booi

North and Northwest Germany

In order not to talk about Corona at this time, but about a more important global issue, I would like to report on an initiative from the northeast of our region: Some members of the Greifswald congregation have been working for some time now on what can practically be done in terms of the cli-

mate crisis. This affects each and every one of us in our private lives – and also life in our communities. Many different ideas have been gathered, what each individually can concretely think about and change, because every small step then in total leads to a big step. Even if many of the ideas are not new, the sum of possibilities is a good way to rethink one's own actions. On this note, a PDF file is enclosed with listed and described information on these possible actions.

Thomas Nayda

Nordic Countries

Only eight months after our foundation of the Nordic Regional Council in the early summer of 2019, everything went into a deep sleep due to the corona situation. The congregations in the Nordic countries have of course many other things to do than help the incarnation of our newborn council – and as the two most recent Nordic synods were cancelled because of travel restrictions we have not met each other for almost a year.

We are planning a Zoom meeting probably in November 2020 and here we hope to get a communication network established between the Nordic congregations and the regional council, so that we can spread knowledge of our expectations of the work in the council and hopefully get in contact with ‘fiery souls’, who would like to contribute to the work in the council. Therefore, I have no news from the countries in our Nordic region – except from the fact that the founding celebration in Vilnius, Lithuania has been postponed from autumn 2020 until 2021.

I can tell, however, that in Denmark during the corona shutdown of the churches, the priests celebrated the Act of Consecration of Man every morning all by themselves without congregation – and now things turned almost back to normal, although we have to keep distance in our church rooms. With regard to this it is a positive thing, that our congregations are not that big!

Lisa Bratlann

Southern Africa

The short important version of what has transpired in our Region during these last extra-ordinary months, is the inner consolidation and quality of experiencing The Act of Consecration Man. When we began to be able to celebrate again without physical communion plus all the known restrictions a few weeks ago, it was and is with new deep listening and wakeful presence. The community is celebrating together tangibly, if physically present or not. This might be one of the precious fruits of the isolation time. There is a sense that ‘2022 has already started now’: meaning, we are founding anew from the inside-out right now, discovering and experiencing new dimensions of the reality of the sacraments. The Act of Consecration of Man is the newest cutting edge event of our time. It is BIG seed-power of great reach and consequence each time. This the igniting joy of conviction and resilience that carries.

It is then with soberness and earnestness that we are beginning to carefully assess and plan how we are going to move forward concretely. All our communities have suffered, like others, losses: on the human front through death and emotional strife, and on the economic front through loss of income, mainly due to members losing jobs and coming to rock-bottom. This has stimulated a lot of unspoken actions of reaching out, sharing with others what one has or can create.

New are the regular Zoom meetings which have brought people in touch who live far away from the city where the congregations gather. They are thrilled to be able to connect and share with like-minded friends. This is one of the things which will have to continue.

In a sense, Namibia has been an exception, because they were never ‘locked-down’ in total isolation like South Africa. So they could continue to hold normal services with congregation communion, celebrate festivals, organise conferences as usual, albeit with heightened awareness of the pandemic and masks only came as a requirement recently. The priests decided to have their regional synod online and proceeded to have weekly synodal meetings since then. We have heard that from October 1st restrictions are being eased, but this does not yet apply to religious gatherings.

Mid-September Rev. Michael Merle has moved to Johannesburg as a resident priest. As each of us four priests in the Region has been alone, this means that Johannesburg has received a strengthening by now having two, while the Hillcrest, Natal community will be visited from Johannesburg. At the same time, we are already in an intense training toward priesthood with Andreas van Breda in Cape Town through our Africa Seminary endeavour. As he has a family with three children and his job was terminated during lockdown, we hope to fund his training through donations. Therefore a fund for SA Priest Training as been established with the Foundation. Feel encouraged to spread the word!! It really matters for the continuation of the Region to be able to train people from here. We also have another iron in the fire, but will have to hold it there quietly for a while to see if it begins to glow bright with hope.

Reingard Knausenberger

no message from:

North-America

Russia

South America

West Germany

Southwest Germany

Nothing new to report.

Hellmut Voigt

Switzerland, Southwest Europe

Our three newly ordained priests have now arrived at their first placements and were joyfully received: E. Oswald in Bern, D. Schiffer in Zürich and M. Toro in Madrid. We are very grateful for this additional support!

Over the summer the chapel in St. Gallen underwent some redesigning. The Christian Community is housed in one of the oldest buildings in town. The wooden ceiling of the chapel, which used to look rather dark, has now been painted in a light-colour; the altar and the rear walls of the altar have been refashioned and now radiate a wonderful colour that responds beautifully to the different angles of the penetrating light.

Otherwise, the virus-related, constantly changing regulations and restrictions, which vary from Kanton to Kanton and from country to country, demand a great deal of flexibility. There is, of course, also a great deal of insecurity. In Italy, for example, not all our usually rented community rooms are yet accessible. In times of need, the Consecration of Man has already been held in the "most unusual" places – for example, in a hairdressing salon! However, a bigger issue was the supply of charcoal during lockdown – Switzerland had temporarily completely stopped postal services to Italy.

Our youth and conference centre in Walkringen, which is usually fully booked from about mid-February to the end of November, was allowed to continue operating – however, due to lockdown the guests could not come! An absurd situation indeed! Fortunately, both the family recreation and the children's holiday camp could be held during the summer. Gradually, regular groups, which often come for weekends, are returning. However, we are still receiving cancellations, so we have budgeted for a loss of about 50% of the income as a precautionary measure. Thanks to applying some restructuring (the house is now run on a part-time basis) we will survive this year.

Christine Jost

Wuerttemberg

We are happy about our new coordinator. She will familiarize herself with the many tasks step by step. Reutlingen has almost completed the renovation of the community center. In Stuttgart North a new pastor was welcomed at the beginning of the school year. But only for a transitional period. If

he succeeds in obtaining a visa for South Africa, he will leave the region again in summer 2021. We are looking forward to a meeting day in the Möhringen congregation of the work centre *Stuttgart der Anthroposophischen Gesellschaft*.

Martin Merckens

Circle of Seven

After consultations with the circle of seven and the regional leaders (Oberlenkers) Vicke von Behr has appointed João Torunsky, the lenker of South America, as his successor. The handover of the leadership (Erzoberlenkeramtes) will take place on Tuesday, June 1, 2021 during the General Synod in Berlin.

João Torunsky will move to Berlin during the summer and together with Christward Kröner and Oliver Steinrueck will form the Oberlenker-Kollegium. Vicke von Behr will remain in office until then.

Yaroslav J. J. Rolka

Verband der Sozialwerke

Well, that's that for now! Despite Corona and the restrictions and limitations that came with it, we were able to carry out almost all of our planned holiday camps this year. This was possible because the leaders agreed that it was vitally important for the children and teenagers to have the enriching experiences of the camps, after school closures, lock-downs etc.

And then the respective teams were also ready to go along. Not one of the over 90 volunteers pulled out because of a possible danger of infection, when children and young people were still publicly portrayed as virus-disseminators during this time. Despite the uncertainty whether the camp will take place or not, they had prepared themselves, made their time available, and at very short notice adjusted their plans (hiking in the Uckermark, instead of in Sweden) etc.

There was a lot of support from many sides, e.g. for setting up and transporting additional tents that were needed. At the beginning of Corona, a trust fund had provided us with a considerable sum of money, regardless of whether we could carry out the camps or not. They also regarded it as a future maintenance measure. This contributed significantly to the fact that we were able to continue with our plans despite the uncertainties. And so, the camps were all together, a carefree time for all participants, unaffected by Corona. At this point, a very big thank you!

There were also a few disappointments: The camp at Easter had to be cancelled, also the helper training course, for the first time in over 60 years. The family camp and also the canoe trip to Sweden could not take place. Now we start planning for the coming year.

Dietmar Schwarz

Conferences/meetings/various

'From the powerlessness of time' | 'Utifran tidens vanmakt...', was the theme of this year's Baltic Sea conference from 25th to 31st July in Davide on Gotland. When we decided on this title in November 2019, we had no idea how reality would catch up to this theme in 2020. While up to now almost 100 people had come to the conference, we had to limit the number of participants to 50 this time; they came from Sweden, Finland, Denmark and Germany, trying to form a community "at a distance". And they succeeded wonderfully. There were four discussion groups in the morning: "The Twilight of the Gods as a Powerlessness" with Bjarne Edberg, "Forgiveness" with Edda Haensel and Carl van der Weyden, "The 'I Am Words' in the Old and New Testament" with Tuula Huhtala and Ingeborg Heins, and "Man – Powerless and Omnipotent" with Harri Salmisto and Gerhard Ertlmaier.

In the afternoons two courses were offered: “Plant Study” with Rebecka Walden and “Form in Flowing Water, a holistic view of water” with Nigel Wells. In addition, there were excursions to the Raukas in the North, to Visby and to Vamlingbo in the South.

The Consecration of Man was celebrated daily in Swedish, Finnish and German at 7:30 am and 9:00 am. Only on Thursday communion was offered in both services. Since we had to refrain from singing, recorders, transverse flutes, the cello and the violin which we had brought with us, sounded to the great joy of all, and also in two wonderful concerts. As in the past, there were various contributions from the participants and a successful running story.

All in all, we were pleased that we had dared to organise the conference, and for many of us the feeling arose that we had come very close to the impulse of our annual meetings and also to the mysteries of the Baltic Sea region, even though our friends from the Baltic States, Poland and Russia could unfortunately not attend.

Gerhard Ertlmaier

no message from:

Körperschaftsverband (KV)

Haus auf dem Berge

Haus Freudenberg

Seminaries/Hamburg

Seminaries/Stuttgart

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