

Among many people today there is a yearning for meaning and spirituality. At the same time there is more strongly than ever a need for unconditional freedom. Christianity often has the reputation of being superficial and without a connection to the realities of life on the one hand, and on the other, to limit human freedom.

However, Christ has both made freedom possible, and at the same time a new closeness between the human and the divine world. To serve both – freedom and spiritual depth – is the central concern of The Christian Community.

How Did The Christian Community Come Into Being?

After the First World War, a group of primarily younger students and theologians sought a new form of Christian life. On the one hand they missed religious depth and spirituality, and on the other, individual freedom in one's relationship to God. In Rudolf Steiner's Anthroposophy, they discovered a new way to understand Christianity and to give the religious life a new content. With his help, the forty-five founded the independent Christian Community in 1922.

In 1941 The Christian Community was forbidden by the National Socialists in Germany, but continued underground until it could begin publicly again in 1945. Since then it has grown. It does not proselytize, but rather goes everywhere it is called. Today there are communities in most European countries, in North and South America, in Australia, Japan, and southern Africa.

Rituals - Form and Freedom in One

All services are conducted in liturgical, ritual form: vestments are worn; words and sequences are clearly ordered and prescribed. This is not a rigid restriction. Rather, it has one simple reason: if the human being is to unfold freely as a spiritual being on the earth, (s)he needs an appropriate body, formed according to a certain lawfulness. The religious celebrations of The Christian Community all intend to create the possibility for the being of Christ to be present on the earth. Here also, an appropriate form is needed so that He can live among us, and be experienced by us in freedom.

Freedom of Teaching and Belief

Along with clear liturgical forms, there is complete freedom of teaching. This is meaningfully restricted insofar that the priest cannot contradict the words of the rituals – that is, his/her own actions.

Everyone in the community is allowed to work out their own beliefs according to their own knowledge and experience. No one is required to subscribe to the Creed (which only the priest speaks during the service) – not even when taken up as a member. There is no specific special teaching. Rather the expression of one's own thoughts is possible and even desired, even if they do not accord with traditional theological opinion.

Sacraments - Steps in Human Development

In The Christian Community, there are seven sacraments, which accompany human development.

- In the Baptism*, the beginning of the connection to the earth is enriched with a new free relationship to heaven.
- In the Confirmation* the inner soul space of the youth is strengthened as it passes through puberty.
- In the Act of Consecration of Man*, the central Communion service, the community can become so inwardly active that Christ himself can become present and the substances of earth, bread and wine are transformed.
- In the new sacrament of confession (The Sacrament of Consultation*) a path is opened for learning to affirm oneself and one's own destiny.
- In the Last Anointing* dying persons are given the strength that will accompany them through death.
- In the Ordination of Priests*, a human being is enabled to perform the sacraments.
- In the Marriage* sacrament, the man and woman affirm their connection to one another and to heaven.
- In addition there are liturgical celebrations for the funeral* and for the Sunday Service for Children* (of school age).

The Gospel

Of special significance is the Gospel. Besides the rituals, it is the central source for the life of The Christian Community. It is our concern to understand its content not only theoretically, but to build up a living relationship to this 'good news from the angels' (Greek: *eu-angelion*).

Pastoral Care

Even very personal questions can be discussed with a pastor. Every imaginable human concern has a spiritual dimension,

* See the separate flyers for these celebrations.

an inner side. Especially when one gets no further with outer methods, it can be meaningful to pursue this inner side. In this way one can develop an independent, creative relationship to one's destiny, and become thereby more capable of action in life. Through the Sacrament of Consultation* this process can be deepened.

Membership

Participation in the life of The Christian Community is open to anyone, independent of membership. The wish to pursue membership through a priest is an acknowledgment that one is active in the community's life. Therefore, membership is no formal act, but rather arises through living with the sacraments and a conscious acknowledgement of them.

The child is not made a member with baptism. It is received into the community, and can freely decide as an adult whether to become a member.

Hierarchy

The divine beings, as they are called in the Bible (angels, archangels, etc.) stand in a hierarchy to one another (Greek: a holy ordering). Through this, they can work together. A community that wants to work out of the power of the spiritual world also needs an ordering, so that in working together, sacraments can come about.

Within this order every priest carries the consciousness and responsibility for his local congregation, some priests for several congregations (Lenker), and a few for the whole Christian Community (three Oberlenkers), of whom one is the Erzoberlenker. With the taking on of such administrative functions, the responsibility grows, but not the prestige, power or economic status of the priest.

All priests grant the Lenkers the task of sending them to their place of work. That the sacraments can be continuously celebrated in all congregations is thus ensured before God and human beings.

Male and female priests receive their ordination standing. They are not meant to submit themselves to an institution, but to place themselves in their tasks out of their free and conscious responsibility. Of course, they are allowed to marry.

Training

From the beginning, The Christian Community built up its own priest training. This encompasses a broad spectrum of theological, artistic, scientific, philosophical, spiritual scientific and anthropological courses and internships. Worldwide one can study at three seminaries: in Spring Valley, NY (USA), in Hamburg and in Stuttgart (Germany).

Finances

The Christian Community is carried exclusively by the voluntary contributions and donations of its members and friends. There are members who can only contribute a little, while others help to make up the difference through larger donations. Contributions are self-determined according to means and an understanding of the needs.



What really is this church?

A Short Introduction

For more information
contact Rev. Gisela Wielki
212 877-0208

www.christiancommunitynyc.org
www.thechristiancommunity.org

Written by Rev. Claudio Holland