

Seventy-Year Anniversary Celebration of the Founding of The Christian Community in New York City and on the Continent

Rev. Gisela Wielki, Madelon Holder, Deborah (Bromley, Hilton) Winograd

Advent, December 8 - 9, 2018

From Rev. Gisela Wielki:

It was a very packed and spirited event with a wonderful balance of humor and seriousness in all the presentations. The mood was buoyant. The house was full. People felt that they really participated in something historic, without being stuck in the past and with lively exchanges between members and friends from the ‘surrounding country’ in our rather short breaks. With Christian Maclean and his wife we had even a participant and contributor from overseas with us.

I am not sure we would have celebrated the seventieth anniversary had it not been for Rev. Bastiaan Baan’s urging that it should be acknowledged. We celebrated forty, because Rev. Verner Hegg was still alive and could be with us, and we acknowledged fifty, of course, because it is half a century. But why seventy? And then I thought that it might be a really unique experience for the congregation to have three priests (Erk Ludwig, Jim Hinds, Gisela Wielki) - each a septuagenarian - who have worked for a substantial length of time in New York City, in the years between 1972 to now, come together for one more time for a special event. It was then that the year seventy struck a chord. Rev. Rafal Nowak joined us. The New York congregation was his doorway to The Christian Community, as it was for Revs. Paul Corman, Susan Lowndes, Susan Locey, and Marcus Knausenberger. Revs. Franziska Hesse, Bastiaan Baan and Liza Marcatto were supporting visitors on Saturday and Rev. Oliver Steinrueck, having only just returned from Berlin, joined us for part of Sunday. We all felt that the event was casting its light across the continent and also contributed to the growing awareness of the coming one hundred year anniversary for the whole of The Christian Community.



From left to right: Revs. Rafal Nowak, Erk Ludwig, Franziska Hesse, Gisela Wielki, Jim Hinds, Bastiaan Baan, Liza Marcatto.

From Madelon Holder:

Attending the 70th anniversary gathering was to live in the word *Become*. Remembering in the present the past connections that brought us to The Christian Community leaves us facing the future with questions that we all live with and could now explore together. The presenters raised in their contributions some of the following issues:

- The power of the sacraments to change the life forces that live between us. (Wielki)
- The geological foundations, particular to New York City and Pala in San Diego county (near Los Angeles, the first West coast congregation) and the precious and surprising treasures they yield: garnets in the former and tourmaline in the latter. (Nowak)
- The ability of the gospel writers to read the life of Christ in etheric seed form and how our interpretations can remain relevant by understanding this. (Hindes)
- The new faculty to actively call upon our thinking as a third element in the transubstantiation of bread and wine. (Ludwig)

Christian Maclean, UK, publisher of Floris Books shared with us vivid portraits of the pioneers who brought this Religious Renewal to North America, including Verner Hegg, the first American to be ordained and the first priest in New York City. In between we were refreshed by all our artistic presenters, Ted Pugh, Fern Sloan, Laurie Portocarrero, Christina Porkert, David Ralph, and Robb Crease.

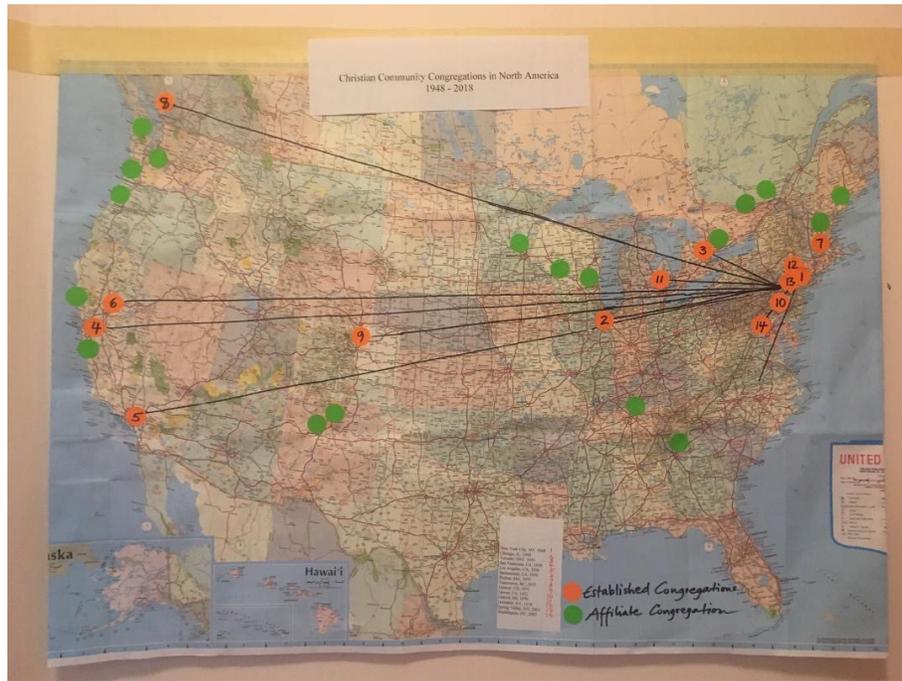


From Deborah (Bromley, Hilton) Winograd:

I began attending the Christian Community in New York City around 1978, by way of an Anthroposophical study group, led by Shirley Latessa, that included theater actors. Rev. Gisela Wielki and Rev. James Hindes were the resident priests during my time there. So this conference felt like a reunion, with some people I hadn't seen in 20 or 30 years.

Along with the picturing of precious gems, garnets and tourmalines, and minerals forming underground, we saw a map of where The Act of Consecration of Man is celebrated on this continent, across the various time zones. This had a special meaning for me: For several years, I have spent time in Sedona, Arizona, whose longitude on this map shows a distinct vacancy. The landscape in this area evokes such a sense of the sacred in me, I felt the need to offer a response in kind. So years ago I started sharing, like a prayer, passages of The Act of Consecration that I remember clearly. The phenomena of the earth and mineral kingdom are vivid there, and I have wondered how to rightly interpret their energies with our understanding of the Christ impulse. Now, Rev. Nowak's research has led me to Dr. Friedrich Benesch's book, *Apocalypse: The Transformation of Earth*, so my own offering can evolve.

During our "greetings from afar," we heard from Rev. Paul Corman, in Peru. He was part of our actors' study group in NY all those years ago, and I witnessed his discovery of The Christian Community and consequent pursuit of the priesthood. I feel deep appreciation for his remarkable journey.



Ted Pugh was also in that study group, and here he was this weekend, still performing. Along with Fern Sloan and Laurie Portocarrero, his Michael Chekhov ensemble presented Thornton Wilder’s *Three Minute Plays*. Their acting approach cast a marvelous spell in the room. Their voices seemed to sculpt the words out of the air. Many years ago, I performed with his ensemble, and one occasion stands out for me: The Christian Community in New York hosted an international conference, attended by Rev. Dr. Benesch. Our group of actors created a short play from the transcripts of Joan of Arc’s trial, and performed it for this event. For me, that entire encounter had a lasting impact.

In one of the presentations a question was raised: how can we more proactively communicate the power of the sacraments, even in subtle ways with the people life puts us in contact with? It was



taken up in a group discussion circle the next day. We acknowledged the solemnity, the formal religious aspects, the language of the service. Suggestions included a better flow between the Anthroposophical Society and The Christian Community, to enhance outreach. As one member noted, he found us by googling “Christianity and Reincarnation.” The immersion of the service can be deeply internal, but we want the fruits of our introversion to be expressed in the world, to connect with other people. And just as our thoughts have a living being, our choice of words are setting energies in motion as we form our intentions for the future.

Last, but not least, Robb Creese told the tale of “The Spider of Light.” I wouldn’t dream of stealing his thunder by describing it, in the hope that others may hear it too someday — it is priceless!