

Newsletter

No. 61 — Saint John's 2020

LETTER FROM THE LENKER

This is a time that asks from each of us in our own way that we be awake. Whatever we may think about the public health crisis and the origins of the new Corona Virus, it is clear that major issues are waiting to be tackled individually, communally and as humanity. Each of us in their way needs to try to understand these. The Christian Community does not prescribe how we are to think about this or any other matter, as it respects the spiritual independence and integrity of its members.

However, there is help available that goes beyond what we can glean from our researches into science and public policy. In this time, when we are unable to attend the Act of Consecration of Man, certain moments in the service may shine out all the more strongly. We can probably all recall the opening words, 'Let us worthily fulfil ...', which we can hear both as a kind of instruction to ourselves and as a prayer to spiritual beings that they will allow us to make our human deed into a holy one. Many of us live with the thought of our angel, who knows better than we do ourselves how our lives, with their triumphs and challenges, give us the perfect opportunity to grow and learn. In these long weeks apart, many of us have been living with the thought of the angel of the congregation, who unites us even when we are not able to meet. Perhaps we have even sensed how he sees this difficult time as a time of possible growth and learning. In moments of national crisis when many millions of people's feelings are united, we can imagine the working of the Folk Spirit. Beyond all this, the fact that the crisis is touching the whole of humanity, might give us an inkling that the Time Spirit is also involved.

How does he look upon the challenges that we are facing? What spiritual opportunities does he see?

When we try to understand the pandemic in the most comprehensive way, we come to see that it has dimensions beyond the merely human. A picture is emerging of socio-economic breakdown and marginalisation, which causes a kind of ecological breakdown. In that situation, viruses can cross species in ways that would not happen in normal conditions. All of this exposes the shadow-side of globalisation, pointing up a planetary crisis that many of us have been aware of for a long time. If we send our thoughts beyond the sphere of the Time Spirit to the consciousness of the Planetary Spirit, a being of the Second Hierarchy, we might ask how he looks at the challenges we are facing. Does he bear within himself a truly planetary consciousness, one that includes the mission of the earth? Even imagining that this could be the case can be fruitful if we turn to this consciousness with our prayerful thoughts and questions.

Such exercises may not lead to clear-cut answers. However, they can help us to feel that we are co-workers with the spiritual world and that these spiritual beings will be at our side when we try to work in line with their aims.

As priests in the Region, we have seen it as our task to find unity in our will, even whilst acknowledging a diversity of opinion about the crisis, its causes and the measures being taken to mitigate it. We will continue to co-ordinate our response, although as we enter the next phase, it is likely that there will be variations between the congregations in how we respond, always in line with government regulations.

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I very much hope that we can be faithful to our task truly to hear each other in the congregations. I would like to encourage us all to write down what we feel to be important questions and insights that we gain in this time, so that we can 'harvest' together afterwards. I sense that this may be one service that we can offer to the world, which may well be overtaken by the hurly-burly of 'normal' life, once the lockdown eases. We have started to collect some of the articles and sermons that the priests have been sending out to the congregations on our central blog, which you can view at rb.gy/z8yeme. There is the option of signing up there.

I have also been moved by another quiet harvest. This comes in conversations and letters in which members of the congregations have described how deeply they have experienced their connection to the Act of Consecration of Man even in this time when they cannot attend it. We are living in a strange

in-between time, sustained by the memory of taking part in the service and longing for the future when we will be able to attend again. This brings to our awareness something that we could have known already: the preciousness of the moment.

The Confirmations have been postponed due to the lockdown. The international leadership of The Christian Community has determined that Confirmations may be held for the rest of the church year, which finishes before Advent. We will be looking at the possibilities as the lockdown measures are loosened.

The provisional date for the Annual Meeting is 16th–17th October. The venue we had thought of was Forest Row. Unfortunately, there was no chance even to start planning this event before the lockdown, so both the date and the venue need to be treated provisionally. Still, it seems worthwhile to share it so that we can keep the weekend clear.

With very best wishes,

Tom Ravetz

Contributions are always welcome for the *Newsletter*, and should be sent direct to kmastreet@hotmail.com. Without such input, the *Newsletter* can't exist!

COMINGS AND GOINGS

COMING TO ABERDEEN

BEGINNING OF THE PRIESTHOOD AND HOW IT ALL STARTED ...

February 2016 / September 2019 / January 2020
March 2020
Faith – Love – Hope

I would like to tell you something about my path towards priesthood. Many people have asked me this question: How do you decide to go to the seminary and why do you want to become a priest?

On February 2016 it all started, and it was a real turning point in my life: a wakeup call from my angel, 'Now it is your turn!'

I was living a good and happy life, satisfied with what I had achieved so far; always trying to learn more. Since the pregnancy of my first son, 28 years ago, I was growing into anthroposophy, the spiritual world was becoming more and more a reality to me. Through

his birth and his growth and development I grew with him, as an active and involved Waldorf mother, as a consultant/sales assistant in a health food shop, selling products and giving nutritional advice, and later as a student of eurhythmics. I would always be able to offer my expertise wherever we would be sent to after the ordination of my husband Willem.

I had supported him during his studies at the seminary and was ready to go with him, on his sending. I was convinced that the priesthood was his path and not mine, although we engaged with The Christian Community together, on the first of January 2006.

He was ordained and we were sent to the UK. I had to give up my life in Holland and was open for all that was to come ... but another study? No thanks!

However, right after the ordinations this spiritual call was very real. Even though I tried to ignore it, it did not leave me in peace. The impulse did not come from myself, as before, when I wanted to do something. It came from

elsewhere. It felt like a call from the spiritual world. I had to start another training.

A few weeks after arriving in Forest Row I attended an orientation course at the seminary, and the first part-time course was just beginning. Immersing myself in what was offered there I felt like coming home. I had been looking for this all along.

September 2016: It became a fact! I really started the training. Monthly I was to go to Hamburg. What an opportunity to be living next to the church, to be involved with many church activities, to be learning with and from the congregation. I could practice what I learned at the seminary. I could sow the seeds I had received in the real world.

The course consisted of eight modules. An introduction module and the other seven being dedicated each to one of the sacraments.

For two and a half years I continued this life between Hamburg and Forest Row, and, after Willem's second sending, Aberdeen.

July 2019: the Circle of Seven in Berlin decided that I could take part in the preparation course for the ordination. From this point the course became full-time. I moved to Hamburg for three months. The outside world moved in the background to allow space inside to grow in preparation for a possible ordination.

January 2020: the decision was made: I was going to be ordained. Different emotions moved my soul. Suddenly I realised the overwhelming weight of the task. At the same time I felt relieved, that four years after the first impulse to become a priest it was now really going to happen. And I felt deep gratitude, accompanied by joy to be given this special task.

From January onwards the course became even more intense. We started to write our ritual books, and through our handwriting all the words of the sacraments were put on paper, and thus became real in text. This was a beautiful process which prepared us for speaking these words as celebrants.

Saturday 7th March, 2020: the day of the ordination. What I received there through the words, the blessing and the substance of oil was an extract of pure faith, love and hope. These essences were flowing into my being, imbued and penetrated by my thinking,

feeling and willing. The faith referring to the past, what I had brought with me, the love in the moment, the present and the hope for the future. With these gifts which I have received I can start to work with devotion in my congregation, to fulfil my task over and over again, to help me celebrate the sacraments, and to work and act out of the spiritual world. A great deep spiritual and physical trust was revealed to me through the presence of the many priests and people from different congregations. All who witness an ordination can feel this blessing themselves as well. Everybody is so to say "ordained within".

On the day after the ordination came the 'sending'. We new priests were officially sent to our first congregations, where we were destined to begin our ministries. I have been sent to Aberdeen.

I am so lucky to be back home in this warm and enthusiastic congregation. This is the one I have got used to already during my training, and now I can bring my experiences back into the world and share them with the people around me.

This is at least what I expected. However, as everybody knows, one week after my ordination the whole world closed down... My induction happened behind closed doors, the services are celebrated without the congregation being present in the flesh.

I am full of joy and gratitude that I can celebrate the Act of Consecration of Man and bring some light into a world that is covered with dark clouds. However, I am also very sad that I cannot celebrate with my congregation being present in the church though I know and feel that they are there and that they join the service in spirit.

At the ordination I have been given a lamp, a special source of light, and together with the congregation we can make it shine. This light can lead us on the way to Christ.

For the moment I cannot "set the lamp on a stand, so those who enter can see the light!" It is behind closed doors, but I try my best to let it radiate into the world, every day.

I carry in me the divine faith, love and hope I have received in the ordination and try to share it in spirit with everybody.

Lucienne van Bergenhengouwen

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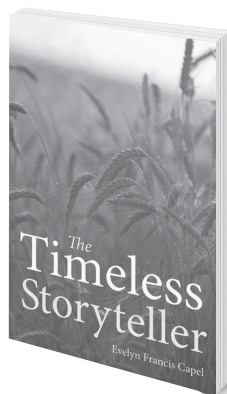


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