



# The Christian Community movement for religious renewal

73 Cainscross Road, Stroud GL5 4HB

**March 2020**

## **Contemplation**

Expressions such as 'self-isolating' and 'social distancing' are really unfortunate, and whilst it is clear what is meant as regards quarantining, it nonetheless has the danger of introducing into our social life concepts that run entirely counter to everything that we seek and strive for in the social life today. Social fragmentation, loneliness and feeling like one doesn't belong are the true epidemic of our time.

Yes, it is true that this is the age where we are called upon to '*wake up*' and '*come to ourselves*', but this is meaningless without a consciously cultivated social context. Earlier times saw social forms where the group soul dominated and '*the community was everything and the individual was nothing.*' The past 2000 years have seen the rise of the free individual where '*the individual is everything and the community is nothing.*' This is of course all quite right, but surely just another step on an evolving path that still seeks its fulfilment.

One feels very much that today still a third way is desperately needed. The creation of new communities where '*the individual is everything and so is the community.*' Perhaps this is what some like to call '*Intentional Community*': communities of free individuals who support each other despite individual differences; or perhaps just especially because of their individual differences.

At any rate we are certainly just at the beginning stages of this new development in humanity and have much to learn on this path, but go this path we must and will!!

With every new modern crisis it seems this path is called for all the more; the path of tolerance, understanding, selfless social engagement, and above all, common spiritual goals.

It seems extraordinary how the current epidemic in the UK falls parallel with our Passiontide. That is something that is largely out of our hands. Whether there will be an Easter, however, seems very much something that definitely is in our hands – and very much in our hearts. Building new community; trusting the untrustworthy; loving the unlovable. Is this what Christian Community really means?

Aaron

Dear Community,

Please see the enclosed letter from our Lenker/co-ordinator Tom Ravetz, which has been written on behalf of our Priest community in Great Britain. As you will understand from the letter, we will have to cancel all programmed congregational events and public services for the foreseeable future, with immediate effect (19th March 2020). This is naturally a shock to all of us and has a lot of challenging consequences.

**Sacramental substance** - The first thing will be to find creative ways to maintain our sacramental substance. The services will still be held at the regular times by the priests with two servers, but with no congregation. The priests will endeavour to include the congregation inwardly at the altar and at the same time we appeal to those of you that wish to, to seek ways to inwardly carry the service(s) from your own places. This could take various forms according to one's own creative impulses. The following may serve as a guideline. Do make it as simple as you need. Keep it manageable. This would be especially helpful for the Sunday services where we could imagine that many others will be doing the same around the country and also in many other countries where it is no longer to hold public services.

- Light a candle at the time of the service with a Christ picture on the table.
- Call to mind the festival period and colours.
- Imagine everyone in the congregation and the candles being light at the altar.
- Read the Gospel reading for the week.
- Read the contemplation/verse/sermon – see below
- Read the Creed or meditate part of it.
- Imagine the best soul forces of the community being fetched by the angel of the congregation and being poured into the cup.
- Imagine the prayers of the community rising with the incense at the altar.
- Imagine the Priest kneeling at the altar with the raised cup accompanied by the Christ.
- Imagine the body and blood of the Christ.
- Speak the Our Father.
- Imagine the communion.
- Extinguish the candle.

**Saturday support** – Every Saturday the priests will endeavour to send out a sermon/contemplation or verse to be used for the coming week and in addition a reminder of the festival time and Gospel reading. This will be especially important during Holy Week and Easter where we will do our best to send something daily. The gospel reading and words of the creed will also be emailed to everybody.

**Weekly news** – we are still sending out the programme knowing full well that most or even all of it will no longer outwardly be able to take place. We want to encourage an on-going consciousness for all the programme and festival items nonetheless. We feel it will prove important in upholding our community substance. In some cases we may be able to send out related programme material and encourage your inner support for certain items. For instance the monthly Gathering for the Dead could be something that some may wish to continue in their own private spaces on behalf of the community and we hope to send out the list of names for each month of those to be remembered. To this end Selina, Aaron and Paul will send out a weekly Community news via email on Wednesdays. (The usual Monday up-date will fall away.) There we will send out

news and programme elements as they come up. Please feel free to email one of us with your own news, announcements, needs, poetry, thoughts, verses, etc if you wish it to be included in the weekly news. Please think of those without email and pass on news where possible.

**Social Support** – Given the current health concerns it is understandable that some may feel the need to stay at home and limit their usual social and community engagements. This may even soon be something that is officially expected for over 70-year olds. This could prove to be very difficult, lonely and stressful in some instances and could give rise to certain needs that require support from others (shopping, someone to talk to, staying in touch, maintaining connections, etc). With this in mind the priests would like to offer themselves as support facilitators for any such needs that may arise. If you have such a need or know someone else who has, then please do not hesitate to email or phone one of the priests and we will do all we can to facilitate the support you need including the possibility of a house visit, using our email list, etc, etc. It would be wonderful if people took the initiative to meet up and do visits and phone calls to maintain the connections with each other. We hope in this way that together we can counteract the present darkness with an abundance of human light, and make even more real our Christian Community as a true community of social trust, confidence and warmth.

Wishing you all much strength and love and warmth,

Aaron and Selina

### **Ordinations**

Fifteen new priests were ordained in ceremonies in Hamburg and Stuttgart which Selina attended. The priests come from many different countries including Argentina, Japan, Romania, Columbia and Finland. Selina went to welcome a new priest to the UK, Lucienne van Bergenhenegouwen, who is Dutch and trained in Hamburg. She will work alongside her husband, Revd. Willem Boonstoppel, in the church in Aberdeen. Hopefully you will be able to meet her in the future, perhaps at the Annual Meeting which has been scheduled for 16th to 18th October (please save the date although the venue is yet to be decided).

### **Children's camp**

Our camp this year is set to take place from the 18th – 28th July. Application forms and more details can be found on our website [www.cc-camps.org](http://www.cc-camps.org)