



# Letter to Laymen

THE CHRISTIAN "FAITH AND LIFE" COMMUNITY



VOLUME III

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NUMBER 6

## Dear Everybody—

We hope that the Memorial Chapel under construction at the Men's Branch of the Community can be completed by May. \$3500 has been spent so far and another \$1500 is needed to complete the structure. The students can use it unfurnished for a year or more if necessary by sitting on the floor or by building temporary benches. The main thing now is to complete the edifice. It will be rugged and simple, but also beautiful and worshipful. If any of your friends or loved ones have died and you wish to make gifts to the chapel in their memory, it will be a fitting, useful, and long-lasting tribute to their memory. Also, our office is prepared to send acknowledgements of such memorial gifts to the appropriate persons designated.

I have managed, with some restraint, to keep financial needs out of this column in recent months and have tried to point up the tremendous advances now observable in the quality of the students, program and curriculum this year. Truly, in my seventeen years in the ministry, I have never seen anything like what has been happening in the Community since last September. Students are coming alive to the meaning of existence and are coming awake to what it means to stand responsibly before God with the conviction that Jesus Christ is Lord of ALL of life. Now however, I must lay before you Friends (actual and potential) of the Community the financial challenge that confronts us if we are to meet current obligations and move forward in the development of this total program.

A. Current operating expense: \$100 per day, \$3000 per month. 600 Friends giving \$5 per month would provide a living endowment for the ongoing program. Urgently needed now.

B. Scholarships as direct aid to seven students unable to pay full cost of room and board, especially four of our foreign students: \$1,527.00.

C. Capital Funds needed to complete payments on present property: (1) Men's Branch, \$50,000; Chapel \$1500; Common Room \$2000; (2) Women's Branch \$64,000; (3) Administrative Branch \$16,000.

D. Research and Expository Funds needed: (1) To commission architectural study for new co-educational branches—

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GOING UP FAST! Taking on its final shape is the Community's Memorial Chapel. The foundation was dug by the members themselves, who also 'toted nearly a half million pounds of stone from a 200-yard rock fence near Austin. When completed, the Community's new place of worship will have a seating capacity of 90.

## Essence of Community: Worship

This is the fourth in a series of articles which are attempting to communicate the "inner being" of the Christian Faith and Life Community. The last three issues of *Letter to Laymen* carried discussions of our program of common study. Beginning in this issue a second major emphasis in the life of the Community is to be scrutinized, namely our common worship. Though this is second in order of consideration, it is foremost in significance and concern. Common worship is the primary and basic activity at the Christian Faith and Life Community as indeed the gathering together of the Body of Christ to worship God is the essential task of the church wherever it exists.

Reflection in this area necessarily makes us the more keenly aware that the Faith and Life Community is a part of the total church, if for no other reason than as a member of the Common Body of Christ we are participating in the judgment and renewal which God is working among all his people in our time at the point of the meaning and nature of Christian worship. The worship of the church is only one of the areas of her life which is under divine assault, but it is a major one and, it might be said, a particularly painful one. Man seems to be more easily driven to re-examine his intellectual life than to question the substance of his worship. Nonetheless, the church today is questioning and this is the beginning of renewal. Certain signs are already appearing in the church at large and are reflected in the thinking and practice at the Christian Faith and Life Community.

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From a letter from G. W. Webber, East Harlem Protestant Parish, N. Y.:

"You may be interested to know that on his return to Union (Theological Seminary) . . . Dr. Kraemer\* gave a very interesting talk to the seminary faculty on his discoveries in America. In the course of his talk he said that the most significant expression of the Church which he had visited in this country was your "Faith and Life" Community. He spoke in very strong terms of the important witness which you are making."

\*Dr. Hendrick Kraemer is on the theological faculty of Leiden University (Netherlands).

## Essence of Community-

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### Reason for Being

One indication of the recovery of the meaning of common worship, and one that is become quite clear to us at the Community, was suggested in the first paragraph above. Whatever else the Body of Christ is, and whatever else its task may be, it is first of all a body that gathers together to worship in God in Christ. Primarily for this reason the Church was called into being—to worship God. Worship is her focal activity without which all other endeavors lose their meaning and all other missions become perverted. This is true, we believe, of all parts, branches or institutions of the Church, be they colleges, seminaries, social agencies, or whatever. Any work which the Church performs, and she has many and varied missions in the world, which does not flow out of the experience of common worship may be good from one or another perspective, but it is not Christian. If and when such common worship is not the foundational concern and the primary practice of the Faith and Life Community, whatever else it may become or be, boarding house, training center, social society or what not, it will not be and cannot be Christian or a part of the true Church of Christ.

The Common Worship at the Christian Faith and Life Community ought to and does inform and nourish the total program: our common study, our life together, our concern for service in the world. Outside of our common worship, our study together becomes a matter of mental exercises or barren intellectualism rather than a vital effort to understand the faith that is within us and to bring all our knowing and living into captivity to Christ. Without our common worship our life together becomes but one more attempt to find security in the establishment of a mutual admiration society rather than a common loyalty to Christ through which we become responsible selves in the midst of life as it is. In the absence of our common worship, our common witness in the world becomes simply the promotion of the Church or the cultural status quo or some humanitarian ideal rather than the manifestation of God's love in all areas and orders of life.

### Worship is Not . . .

Worship at the Community, as we interpret ourselves, is then the essential basis for all our other activities, but more, it is that without which we cannot even understand ourselves Christianly. This brings us to the matter of the core of Christian worship. Though in a later issue this will be discussed in more detail something must be said here if the role of worship at the Christian Faith and Life Community is to be grasped at all. The Church today is not

raising the problem of worship in an abstract fashion but is concretely asking the question of what we as the People of God are doing when we gather to worship. In raising this issue the church has been made painfully aware of much idolatry. We have come to see that in actuality we sometimes gather together to glorify some psychological state of peace or self-unity, and often our services are ordered to create such states of being. At times we honor some configuration of personal virtues or some cluster of social ideals and thus shape our services to empower men to realize them. Sometimes we worship some abstract metaphysical concept which serves to delight the mind, or some cosmic force which can be manipulated on behalf of our noble ends. All of these are false objects of worship. The Church, when it is the Church, does not come together to experience peace of mind nor to have its ideals lifted nor its batteries recharged. It rather gathers to understand itself anew before the Word of God in Christ and hence before the God who gives that Word in Christ.

### There is a Word . . .

The total Christian service is a dramatic representation of this Word without which mankind is without hope. For the word of God in Christ is, that precisely there where man has no word, there is a Word. The Word of God in Christ is, that just there where all of man's words to himself about the meaning of life become vain and empty, there is a WORD. The Word of God in Christ is, that just there where there is human darkness there is light, just there where there is human loneliness man is not alone; just there where there is human despair there is hope. The Word of God in Christ is that man as he is, in his anxiety and guiltiness, as creature and sinner, is infinitely and groundlessly loved, received, valued, accepted. This is the Good News by which the church is continually nourished. It is the Gospel which she delivers to the world. Whenever the Body of Christ gathers together as a church it is to receive and to declare this Word of God in Christ. Whatever worship may be in other religious communities, this is the core and substance of Christian worship.

Queries often arise among Church folk, as well as those outside the Faith, as to why the people of God come again and again to worship or why an individual can't worship Christianly by himself. Such questions are based on a faulty understanding of ourselves before God and upon a misconception of the nature of the Gospel. The man of faith is born of the Word in Christ; he lives in God's love for him. But this is something which he never possesses, or lays hold upon once and for all. The man of faith is forever

and continually dependent upon this Word being spoken to him. Again and again and again he must hear it. Again and again he must gather with others to hear it. Precisely because he does not own it he cannot say it unto himself. He must HEAR it—and this means from another. Only where two or three are gathered together in His name, is Christ the living Word in the midst. We go to church, or gather to worship in order to hear the Word from another, and in order to speak the Word to another. We hearken and declare. Our gathering is not based upon a mutuality of feeling or a common search but upon the necessity of giving and receiving the Word. This is what is meant by the priesthood of all believers. Not that every man is his own priest, but that every man is priest for the other in his declaring the living Word. Or perhaps, to put it better, we all declare the Word to the other one and all the others declare it unto us. We each do our own hearing, and we cannot hear for another, but we can only hear when the other speaks, and the other can only hear when we speak. For just this reason worship is at the center of the Christian Faith and Life Community. There is no faith in Christ save in the midst of a worshipping body where the Word is uttered and appropriated.

### Worship and Witness

Finally, there is one further aspect of this matter of locating the place and significance of common worship at the Community. It needs only a word here for it will be discussed at some length in another issue dealing with our common witness in the world. We have spoken at some length of the gathered community. But the church is also the scattered community. The Body of Christians assembles for worship and reflection and fellowship but it also disperses into the world. Neither one or the other but both constitute the church. The two are inseparable: worship and witness. We gather to worship and scatter to work. We withdraw to hear the Word and return to the non-Christian world as witnesses—each in his own station, his own situation, his own task. At the Christian Faith and Life Community, we meet in the morning for Worship as a gathered Community after which we scatter into the world for our day's work. And since we are college students our world is in the first instance the University, and our work is that of a University student: our study, our organizational and social life, our tasks in the religious foundations, and all else that goes with it. Here where God has placed us at this time we are to creatively cultivate God's good earth, here we are to creatively witness to God's great love in all that we do, here we are to creatively live responsible

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## Patsy Morrow



Recently, one of the major areas of human existence studied in Community seminars was that of "Vocation" or simply "Work." Patsy Morrow, a senior Sociology major from Johnstown, Pa., had this interesting comment regarding Christian Vocation:

PATSY MORROW "In the past, when I heard people talking about dedicating their lives in full-time Christian service, the picture that popped into my mind was of a long sawdust trail leading to Africa and the mission field. This never appealed to me for a number of different reasons, so I felt that I was automatically dropped to a second class vocation, that I had no calling, and that Christianity had nothing to say to my vocation.

The Church today is so segmented away from vocation that the idea of a calling is limited to the ministry. This leaves us with a sort of double standard of vocations. Those who are wholehearted enough to surrender the financial rewards offered by business or by the secular professions and enter the ministry or other church work are acknowledged to have first class Christian vocations. Everyone else is automatically relegated to a second class vocation which may or may not be "Christian."

I have now come to see errors in this reasoning. Dedicating my life in full-time

## The Bible: Dialogue and Encounter

"The New New Testament," a series of lectures delivered by Dr. Fred Gealy from Perkins School of Theology, Southern Methodist University, has been one of the most significant events in the life of the Community during the past several weeks.

An outstanding American New Testament scholar, Dr. Gealy's outstanding publication has been his critical work on the Pastoral Epistles in the *Interpreter's Bible*. Speaking to the Community on two successive Fridays, February 22 and March 1, Dr. Gealy's series was divided into four topics:

- I. *Dialogue and Encounter*
- II. *Some New Perspectives*
- III. *Is There A Gospel?*
- IV. *History, Myth, and Gospel*



### Dialogue:

Human life consists of *dialogues* or encounter situations; the Bible also is made up of dialogues, in which I am involved in three directions:

dialogues between myself and me . . .  
 dialogues between my neighbor and me . . .  
 dialogues between God and me . . .

We find these dialogues in ourselves before we find them in the Bible. For example,

Christian service is possible whether I'm a high school English teacher or a housewife because this term now has a new meaning for me. It now means making Jesus Christ my starting point in life and living through my understanding of Him in relationship with our Father. In this way *all* of life is a calling—a Christian vocation.

the Temptation Story in Genesis has a familiar ring for this is first of all a dialogue between me and myself. I, you see, am the snake. I say to myself, "Did not God say you shall not?" Myself answers: "Yes, God *did* say 'you shall not'." And then I (the snake) reply, "Maybe He didn't mean it. Nothing risked, nothing gained. At least I'll try God out."

And the real encounter comes between myself and God. But it is here that I try to close up the dialogue, because I see too much. I see myself (like Adam) naked and I huddle behind masks. I run from this encounter and hide. But God seeks me out and says, "Where are you?" He knows where I am and I know where I am, but only in the dialogue situation can I hear this question.

So the problem becomes, "How do I keep these dialogues open?" In reading the New Testament, it is helpful if we ask ourselves four questions:

1. *What do the New Testament writers intend to say?* (If we are honest, the reason we are interested in what they intended to say is for *our* own sakes, not for their sakes.)
2. *What did Jesus say?* (Or, what happened? what were the events?)
3. *What do we say?* (We must take ourselves seriously and ask ourselves, "Who am I?" The answer can only be, "As a creature of God, I am.")
4. *What will God say to us out of this comyle?* (This, ultimately, is the most important question.)

Well, if this is such good news and if this message is being proclaimed everywhere by the Christian Church, why all this search for meaning. There are many reasons, but the most basic is probably that to accept this love, this meaning, a man's only certitude is in his decision of Faith made in the midst of the Church which has declared this love to him. How can a man be sure of himself? Why should a man accept this kind of meaning which involves such uncertainty when there are other kinds of meaning about which he can center his life? The answer is that he will not. As long as he can find some security to cling to, he will not set himself into the unknown sea that is a life before God. As long as a man can find his own answers to life, he will not be susceptible to those that God might have for him.

So the search for meaning continues. And it looks as if it will go on forever and ever. Men want to be secure, they want to know what to do and when to do it. They will give themselves almost to anything that will give them answers that sound at least halfway good. And this is the sickness of the Church today. It gives answers—conclusive answers about how life is and ought to be when one is a Christian. The Church does not tell a man that he must stand before the One who in the final analysis is unknowable. They do not tell him that though this is a fearful place to stand, he can dare to stand there because this Unknowable One loves him. There is no caution given that to dare to stand there is to be absolutely insecure and uncertain about what to do and when to do it. No one talks about the fearful freedom and responsibility that falls upon one who sees himself loved by God. And because this is not talked about,

no wonder the churches are not speaking to the people. The people of this day—when they are honest with themselves—know all about the uncertainties and insecurities of life. This is why they are searching. To help them, the Christian Church should not take them out of their insecurity by giving them a dream world to live in. The Church must point its finger at man and say that he is loved and accepted right where he is, that he can dare to live in uncertainty because the world is in the hands of One who cares.

To be sure the proclaiming of the Gospel in this way does not guarantee its acceptance. But the center of the Christian Faith is not public approval; it is the cross. The world murdered Christ and still murders Him because of the offense of his claim and the scandal of his Word. The Church must be willing to accept this kind of fate, too. The Church is not called to win popular approval; it is called to proclaim to man what kind of creature he is and that even though there is no excuse for his being what he is, God loves him. In essence the proclamation is the Lordship of Christ. This proclamation takes courage, for it does not give the kind of answer most men are looking for. Suffering might well be what is returned. No matter, this is what the Church must proclaim; this Word is the only answer that can give lasting meaning: Man is loved by God through Christ Jesus. And whatever the cost to herself, the Church may speak in that confidence that the word in Christ—and this word alone—is capable of bringing meaning at that point where all the striving of men to create meaning for themselves collapses into meaninglessness.



## Essence of Community-

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lives for God's glory. Thus our common ministry necessarily flows out of the hearing of God's Word of acceptance from the Body of Christ. And because we are ever and utterly dependent on the Word of God's forgiveness, we again return to worship. To live in Christ is to live in the decisive awareness of God's love which enables one to decisively live a life of service. To be a man of faith is to serve within the world but where there is not a gathering in Christ's name, there is no genuine going forth in this name. So our life at the Christian Faith and Life Community is, like Christian living everywhere, first of all a life of assembling to worship and scattering to minister in the everyday occupations at hand.

This then points in part at least to the way in which common worship has a part, the prior part in our ministry at the Christian Faith and Life Community. It is that which gives meaning to and directs all our other concerns; it is the means, through the giving and receiving of the Word, of the perpetual re-occurrence in our lives of the Gospel; it is the source of the Christian outreach into the world. Without this at the center we would not know who we are or understand what we must do. It is our firm persuasion that within our common worship we in no wise could fulfill our stated purpose of providing informed articulate and committed lay leaders for the church. Indeed the members would not even have Christian self-understanding, for all there possible knowledge without this continuing experience of worship together.

## Dear Everybody-

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\$2000; (2) To lay groundwork for establishment of a related ecumenical training center for clergy and laity in or near Austin, serving the Southwest, USA.

More could be said, but enough for now. The clergy and the laity indeed have a common ministry and we are beginning to glimpse this with a clarity not seen since the Reformation.

W. Jack Lewis

Editor's Note: Don Warren, the author of "In Search of Meaning," is a member of the First Methodist Church, Beaumont, Texas. A law student, Don is finishing his third year at the Community serving as one of the seven Senior Fellows.

### DENOMINATIONS

Armenian Orthodox	1
Baptist	9
Church of Christ	1
Disciples of Christ	8
Episcopal	4
Evangelical and United Brethren	1
Methodist	32
Moravian Brethren	1
Presbyterian	23
Society of Friends	1
Resident Inquirers	3
Undecided	1
	85

### CLASSIFICATIONS

Freshmen	1
Sophomores	14
Juniors	24
Seniors	33
Graduates	13
	85

### MEN

Engineering (10)	5
Mechanical	1
Chemical	2
Aeronautical	1
Electrical	1
Architectural	1
Law	2
Pre-Medicine	5
Philosophy	1
Geology	1
History	3
Architecture	1
Physics	1
English	4
Plan II	8
Mathematics	2
Ed. Psych.	1
Ed. Admin.	2
Psychology	2
Government	1
Sociology	1
Indus. Manag.	1
Business Admin.	3
Chemistry	1
Anthropology	1
	51

### WOMEN

Elem. Ed.	4
Home Economics	2
Plan II	6
Interior Dec.	2
Chemistry	1
Psychology	1
Art	2
English	5
Latin	1
Spanish	1
French	1
History	1
Pharmacy	2
Mathematics	1
Social Work	1
Sociology	1
Drama	1
	34

### AGE GROUPING

18-20	34
21-22	34
23-28	14
29-37	4
	85

### STATES REPRESENTED

Illinois (2)
Iowa
Louisiana
New Mexico (3)
New York
Ohio
Pennsylvania
Texas (39)
Wisconsin
Colorado

### TERRITORIES

Hawaii
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### OTHER COUNTRIES

Argentina
Formosa
India
Jordan
Pakistan

### TEXAS CITIES AND TOWNS REPRESENTED

Alpine	Corpus Christi	Grand Prairie	Marlin	Port Lavaca
Alvin (3)	Dallas (2)	Houston (9)	McCamey	San Antonio (6)
Anson	Denison	Iago	Menard	San Benito
Austin (8)	Edinburg	Irving (2)	Midland	San Marcos
Beaumont	Elgin	Kerrville	Pampa	Texas City (3)
Boling	El Paso	Laredo	Perryton (2)	Weslaco (2)
Brady	Ft. Stockton	La Tuna	Port Arthur	Van Alstyne
Bryan	Gatesville (2)	Lubbock		

Many friends of the Community are needed! In the past the chief support of the Community has come from Christian laymen of many denominations, donating as individuals, whose gifts have ranged from \$1.00 a month to \$2,500 a year. Several donors have provided one or more \$300 sponsorships, annually for particular students designated by the Board of Directors. Those donating \$100-\$300 are assigned a proportionate sponsorship of one student.

Several additional channels for giving:

Local churches and church organizations placing the Community in their benevolence budget to sponsor a student at \$100-300 a year.

Civic organizations sponsoring a student as one of their projects, e.g., Kiwanis, Rotary, etc.

Charitable foundations contributing funds on the basis of shared interest in special educational and religious work.

Special larger gifts from individuals to meet special needs concerning housing, scholarships, libraries, loans, etc.

Corporations, companies, business firms, and labor unions contributing from a desire to encourage training of responsible Christian leadership in their respective fields.

Memorial gifts from any of the above.

If you have been challenged by the purpose and potential of this "Venture of Faith" and desire to share in its growth, tax-deductible contributions may be made to: The Christian Faith and Life Community, 2511 Rio Grande, Austin 5, Texas.

### CHRISTIAN "FAITH AND LIFE" COMMUNITY 2511 Rio Grande, Austin 5, Texas

Executive Director: W. Jack Lewis; Editor: Bill Cozart

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