

# Glimpses

## Newsletter of the Anthroposophical Society in Canada

No. 98 Winter 2020/21

**OCTOBER**

Dear members, dear friends,

The holidays are over and the new school year has started - or depending on where you are in the world, the second half of the school year. Yet, where we could be looking forward with positivity to new encounters and ventures, there is uncertainty - and fear.

This cannot be ignored; it asks us to take hold of and shape society's task towards children and young people in new ways: to receive them on earth and enable them to actively participate in the world that is being renewed by them.

**Ways to unite**

This task of taking hold of and shaping society in new ways is not restricted to schools, but is one that is everywhere and that asks us to unite. It applies not least to our working together in the Anthroposophical Society, in anthroposophical organizations and in the globally linked spheres of life and work.

In this respect, too, the performance of Goethe's Faust Parts 1 and 2 at the Goetheanum was a great experience: after the extended closure of the stage, it was possible to present the new production by Andrea Pfaehler and Eduardo Torres three times during the European summer, each time with full or almost full audiences (within official restrictions) who received the

outstanding artistic achievement with gratitude. The response was positive throughout.

**Space for current impulses**

We also look forward to uniting and working together at the forthcoming Annual General Meeting of the Anthroposophical Society. Given the fact

that conditions have changed so much, we envisage this meeting as a space for concerns and impulses that are currently prevalent. The call to "willingly unite with the world in love" is more urgent now than ever - and is often more difficult to put into practice. It needs strong and renewed mutual trust.

We warmly invite you to participate -



virtually or in person - in the AGM on 31 October. This is where the Society can perceive itself through you, dear members, and where we can take the next steps forward.

Warm greetings,  
Constanza Kaliks, Goetheanum

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## Supporting Anthroposophical Initiatives in Canada

### A Message from Your Council



left to right - Bert Chase, Micah Edelstein,  
Susan Koppersmith, Catarina Burisch  
John Glanzer, Claudette Leblanc

Your Council finds its central task in supporting Anthroposophical initiatives born out of a Canadian impulse. Our ability to support initiatives comes in many forms, from moral and public support, communication and fostering awareness, providing advice and a connection to the Goetheanum, and

monetary support in the form of grants and short term bridge funding.

Financial resources to fund initiatives typically come from member donations where the Society connects donors to general or specific projects. The coordination of these monetary flows is not always exact, creating deficits one year and surpluses another year. To manage these ebbs and flows, the Society is blessed with a reserve fund that originally came from the sale of Hill House, the national Society headquarters in Toronto.

The fund has been kept in secure, liquid investments to both protect capital and make it available when needed. Its value fluctuates according to those withdrawals and deposits to the fund each year. As of year-end 2019, the fund value was approximately \$254,000. There has been an ongoing discussion of different perspectives around the role and use of the fund. Lately, questions have come up at recent AGMs. Members ask, how can we put this money to good use and keep it flowing? Below is a characterization of the process to access funding, and a list of recent initiative support activity.

Members can apply for grants or bridge financing for anthroposophical initiatives. Bridge financing acts as a "float", where cash is provided to get an event started. This is normally fully repaid right after the event income can cover it.

Whether funding is given temporarily or as a grant (no repayment) needs to be agreed upon upfront in writing (before there is a problem or misunderstanding). The Council understands that not all

initiatives can generate enough income to pay fully for themselves. Important initiatives such as the Encountering Our Humanity conference of 2016 drew people from across the world; this initiative incurred a deficit of \$29,000 which was initially covered out of reserve funds and substantially restored over subsequent years.

From May 2019 to May 2020 Council supported or funded the following requests:

- Vancouver Mystery Drama Group
- Nicanor Perlas visit to Vancouver
- Two Class holders attending a Class conference in London, England
- Visual Arts Section
- Auriel Eurythmy
- Tuition support for a Eurythmy student
- Parzival Project (Emmanuel Vukovich)
- Foundation Stone Meditation Book project from Les Éditions Perceval
- Demeter (in process)

Council looks at each request individually. Rather than a rote, mechanical process, each request is weighed against the entire Canadian landscape in the context of finding the highest good. We are particularly interested in financially helping initiatives that have a “multiplier effect” – eg they involve and support entire groups of active and energized ASC members wanting to promote initiatives out of the work of Rudolf Steiner. For example, receiving a request to help an individual student with tuition, but rather funding faculty travel costs and bringing tuition fees down for all students.

To access funds, members can send an email to our President, Micah Edelstein. [1micah@gmail.com](mailto:1micah@gmail.com)

Finally, ongoing discussion on the future of our policy around the reserve fund may shape and evolve our approach to requests.

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## **Interview with Micah Edelstein, President, Anthroposophical Society in Canada**

Conducted by Geraldine Snowden and Robert McKay April 25, 2020

*This interview contains Micah's personal thoughts, experiences and opinions and no part of the interview represent views or opinions of the Anthroposophical Society of Canada.*



*Since the interview was made, Micah has stepped down from the board of the South Shore Waldorf school to focus on building the next phase of the school.*

**Geraldine:**

Micah, can you tell us a little bit about yourself, a bit of your biography?

**Micah:**

Sure. I was born into a family that was already at the Toronto Waldorf School (TWS). Both my parents were active Anthroposophists and still are. My dad was teaching Biology and Woodwork and was also helping finish the building because the school had just been built and wasn't completed yet. My mom was working in the kindergarten, then she joined the doctor's clinic when it opened in Hesperus. She is trained in Germany as a doctor's assistant and helped Dr. Kenneth McAlister for 22 years at the doctor's clinic. So I was totally surrounded. I was at the Waldorf School during the day, and then often I would walk over to the doctor's office and usually hang out until my mom was finished work. And also at Hesperus. So I was immersed in Waldorf Education, Anthroposophical medicine, retirement living, and an amazing community from birth.

**Geraldine:**

Can you identify some experiences that prepared you to meet Anthroposophy or lead you to Anthroposophy?

**Micah:**

I came to Anthroposophy as an adult, or returned to it. I was brought up in it, really immersed in it. But then I went to university and I went as far away from it as I've ever been. I will describe it in terms of cosmic imagery. We are on this orbit, a deep orbital swing, the perigee, and apogee. My apogee, the farthest out, was during my university years.

I'm on the perigee right now, going ever deeper, as I get more and more involved in Anthroposophy and that includes the Society work. I was asked to join the Society by Judy King who was finishing her 7 year term on Council. Eventually I agreed after a year and a half of her

asking. I worked for about a year with the Council. I was also asked to be on the board of the South Shore Waldorf School in Nova Scotia. And now we're building the next phase of the Waldorf School. So the journey is continuing.

**Rob:**

When you grow up with Anthroposophy the way you did, it's not yours yet. Was there a point at which you identified yourself with it? You could have rejected it but decided not to. Was there some pivotal point?

**Micah:**

Really good question. There was. It was a very clear moment. I realized, when I was in university and far away from it all, that I just couldn't stop thinking about it. I realized that it was a big part of me, like destiny or karma that was really waiting to be fleshed out. I also wasn't going to find real nourishment out there in the world away from these centers and communities where Anthroposophy has become the foundation of our activities. I just knew that I had been given something, and that my path in life was not to reject it. It was actually to go into it, and work with it. And as soon as I realized that, I just felt like it was the right decision. I mean, it continues to impress me, how enriching it is, how much we can actually do if we consciously work with Anthroposophy. It's like a force in the world. But of course, the art is learning how to work with it.

**Geraldine:**

Could you tell us what Steiner book that you have read that has profoundly affected you?

**Micah:**

Every book I read has a profound effect. I remember Steiner writing that it's not right that anthroposophists read every book he's written, but that they read a book that speaks to what they're doing in their lives. So I'm always aware that it can't just be reading, because that's not Anthroposophy. Anthroposophy needs to be living, brought into our activities. The book that's really inspired me recently is *The Mission of Christian Rosenkreuz*. It's a wonderful book about the being and incarnation of Christian Rosenkreuz and his mission, and what he has made possible for humanity. If we didn't have this personality, then we actually wouldn't be able to have certain experiences. It's because of him that humanity is able to, for example, choose lives of great suffering that ultimately bring us and others towards higher truths. It has a profound connection to the Parsifal story and to events in our biography when viewed as chapters of significant soul suffering that lead us to understand Christ in our own way.

**Geraldine:**

Why do you think that pursuing the study of Anthroposophy is so worth the effort and important for the world?

**Micah:**

Anthroposophy is working homeopathically in the world. People have been exposed to it. Almost everybody has been exposed to it. But they've either quickly rejected it or become aware of it. Either way it keeps poking at them. And that's kind of how I see it. It is stimulating us to wake up and really question things that, if you don't have Anthroposophy, you might just adopt unconsciously. A lot of the time I think, it's an untruth that would be

adopted. Anthroposophy is bringing truth and a foundation of truth, and that's really what it is. It's not that it's the only way. It brings the soil, you could say, that enables truth to flower.

**Rob:**

I would love to hear you talk about biodynamic farming, because I know you're involved in various ways. And I know there's some interesting stuff going on down in Nova Scotia.

**Micah:**

Biodynamics seems to be an entrance into Anthroposophy. I keep hearing people discover biodynamics, and then they get very excited about it. In that way they're brought also into contact with Anthroposophy. Personally, I haven't been so practically involved in biodynamics recently, only because of the work I do for the Society and for the South Shore Waldorf School. But today I was helping build a garden here at the Robert Pope Foundation near the school. It's a foundation in honor of Doug Pope's brother who died of cancer. Doug wants to bring health awareness and offer a place for artists to come and study and be in nature and do various artistic retreats. Doug and I are great friends. I'm also helping Kaitlin Brown, the new Kindergarten teacher, create the *Land of Milk and Honey*. It is a 25 acre biodynamic farm near the school with milk goats, a donkey and sheep. Next year there will be a cow. It's a farm for the school community. Kaitlin is adamant that human requires daily animal contact. I milk the goats for her.

**Rob:**

What's it been like for you to be on the board of the Waldorf School?

**Micah:**

It's been good. I have to say, I've never really been a fan of boards. And now I'm on two! I've been able, for the most part, to work in the way that I prefer to work, which is actually to bring something new and to work out of the will, which also means into one's karma. I don't think boards are particularly effective, for example, in cultivating a healthy spiritual life. They can actually interfere with spiritual progress. The problems we see arising in many Waldorf schools now are issues related to the inability of boards and faculty to work out of anthroposophical life. Rudolf Steiner articulated how essential anthroposophical life and work are for the success of Waldorf education. The two are intimately related, like night and day. It's also understandable how the two cannot be separated either at the board or faculty level. Anthroposophical life brings Waldorf pedagogy and culture into a healthy relationship with the earthly, material decisions boards are tasked with. What I bring into my work at the school is my experience of being nurtured by an anthroposophical community and education. The wonderful benefits of working with the spiritual being of the school and holding away awareness of overly material mindsets that can bring something unhealthy into spiritual life or destroy it to a degree. Katja Rudolf is also a member of our South Shore Waldorf community,—and helped to rescue the Toronto Waldorf School during its financial crises. The two of us are drawing on our experiences to try to avoid similar pitfalls of ideas and decisions that work counter to what nourishes Waldorf schools and communities.

**Rob: Can you give me an example? Can we put a little meat on the bones there in terms of what these dangers look like?**

**Micah:**

One of the biggest dangers in this whole movement is that Waldorf schools don't stand firmly as anthroposophical grounded Waldorf education. There tends to be a bit of a timid-ness especially on the board level to really stand firmly as a spiritual education. Boards are usually populated by professionals, they bring wonderful skills like legal and business knowledge. But when those things become the drivers for decisions, that's the beginning of the end, in my opinion. That's not working consciously with the being of a Waldorf school. We have to meet some legal requirements and some financial disclosure needs to be there, but at the same time, the school needs to be active, vocal and confident in its spiritual work and foundation.

**Rob:**

So any attempt to, you know, hide Anthroposophy under a bushel in a way, is going to get in the way of a school becoming what it can be?

**Micah:**

I would say that's what most schools right now are dealing with, this question of how much Anthroposophy is in the school and at what level. I bumped up against AWSNA planning the Waldorf alumni conference and I think that it can become a challenge for Waldorf education. Fixed views are not in the spirit of Waldorf education in my opinion. It's about diversity and freedom and putting these great souls (teachers)

in the driver's seat. Each school can be allowed to be independent and unique and different in many ways. Each one is the expression of the faculty body. And of course, no two human beings are the same. So we're going to have a different psyche in every school but Anthroposophy is what grounds and connects it all. In Steiner's lectures on education he speaks to the experiences within the teacher. If the teacher's teaching math, they have to connect the math to their own biography, their own life experience or it's not going to be received the same way by the student. And that's really saying the opposite of what standardized education is all about, where it doesn't really matter who's delivering it. It's just about getting through the curriculum. So then you just have a mouth talking versus an actual life experience being presented to the student.

I can give you another example. I agreed to work on the school building, with the expectation that the community would participate because I felt it could be a community building initiative that would strengthen the being of the school, the school would continue to grow and the students would benefit. To my surprise it didn't really happen from the parents. It happened from the grade four and five students. They would come out during recess and say, can we help? Initially I thought, no, I can't say yes. But then I had no choice because we needed to fill in a large hole. I looked around, there's all these rocks and I said, "Hey, kids, grab all the rocks and throw them in the hole." And it took about 20 minutes. Then they just kept coming back and asking for more work.

Two days ago, one of the kids was

helping put the shingles on the siding and he said he had experience. He's only eight years old. I set him up and he starts nailing the shingles on and then he asked me if he could set up the measurements. And I said, yeah, you have to measure four and a quarter inches. Do you know how to do that? And he said no. So I showed him the tape measure and I said, you know, these are inches and an inch has four quarters. It's written with the four on top and the four on the bottom. The bottom tells you how many are in the whole. Then I said, are you old enough to learn fractions? And he didn't really say anything. Then I went back to what I was doing, and then I kind of panicked, and I thought, oh my God, I just left him, and he's already on the next row. And I went over and checked it quickly and he had got it perfect. He understood perfectly the four and one quarter measurement. And I thought, oh, that's Waldorf education, because it was coming through my experience. It was very grounded. There was no abstraction.

**Geraldine:**

So the child knows and feels now that this is his school.

**Micah:**

That's it! It's a very deep connection that he's going to have his entire life. When you give kids direct experience, it's a solid foundation for their entire life. No matter what they're asked to do in life, they feel they can do it.

**Rob:**

A great story, I love it. So let's talk a bit about your voyage into working with the Council. You're the president of the Society at the moment. It's a big part of your life these days.

**Micah:**

Yeah, it is actually, especially in the last month, because we have this AGM coming up and I was really pushing with Michaelic enthusiasm to plough forward. We're going to do this. We're not going to be stopped. But then it became clear that it would actually cause more harm. So the question arose, do we do the AGM at a later time in the year? We didn't feel good about that because actually in the bylaws there has to have been an AGM by June. So we thought, let's just try to do it virtually. We had to really think about that. What does it mean to do a virtual AGM? How do you do it? The length, for example. People are not going to be online for eight hours. So how do we do this in a much shorter time?

I was really against the idea initially. But I'm actually excited about it now. I think it can be a fun experience and we might actually have the largest AGM attendance ever because people from across Canada can come, not just those in one city. Some people are not going to like the idea and they're not going to want to join. We understand that because we do recognize the importance of face to face. There's no question there. There's a motion to allow for this type of AGM now in the bylaws, which we didn't have. My original wording was to allow for it under exceptional circumstances, because I think there's always the danger that future Councils could, just out of convenience, say they want to do a virtual—AGM. Not necessarily out of necessity. So that's something we have to just carry.

The Council work has been great. It's interesting how my role as the president

came about. Dorothy Lebaron was passionate about choosing the next president before she left. She did wonderful work. And I really enjoyed having Dorothy as president. She worked with Jeff Saunders to pick one of the existing Council members as the next person. As we do with the selection of the general secretary, we put some names forward. We really consider them individually before voting. It usually goes through three rounds because we all have our first, second and third preferences. And then, based on the consensus, we decide.

I told everyone I really think we need to find a different way of managing the Society. I don't believe in the structure we have. It would take some work, but we can change the structure. We don't have to be a Not for profit corporation (NFP). We could just be a society. That's why we have the current structure, because the government expects certain things from a NFP. We have to deliver on those. We need financial statements, to hold an AGM, and elect a treasurer, secretary and president. But we also have the option to create everything on our own within the framework of a society. We would be free to come up with everything. And we're still legally recognized including as a charity, which is how the Waldorf School here in Nova Scotia is set up. It's set up through the Society Act. So I said to the Council that they are asking me to do something I don't believe in. I can't select another president. Then there was this debate about whether I could actually abstain. We decided I could. So I abstained. And then enough people put my name forward as president. I was in an awkward position because now you are asking me to do something I don't want



to do. I thought about it for two months before I agreed to it. Jeff Saunders suggested I say yes and then work to bring a new governing model. So I agreed to do it for the interim, if the Council was willing to work together to find a different way of structuring the Society. That's where we are now, I hope we can follow through but we are working in that way. For example, one of the other motions coming forward is to allow any Council member to sign membership cards. That's been the president's role and I've been doing it. But I felt it would be nice to share it with other Council members if they want to do it, because it's a very nice thing to do to welcome somebody into the Society and sign the card for them.

I was a little concerned though, that the current Council really wants a leader, somebody in the driver's seat. And that's something I picked up in the AGM work because when I wasn't stepping forth as the president and making those decisions, things got chaotic and confusing. I think there is a need for that type of decision making. But it doesn't necessarily have to be a president's role. It could be worded and carried out differently.

**Rob:**

It sounds to me like your understanding of what it means to be a leader in an anthroposophical context is going through a kind of development.

**Micah:**

Yeah, it's very much a gesture of the future. What's being asked, what's coming from the future and how do we move away from what's been shaped by the past? I don't think it can be a radical change. There are a lot of people who

are used to the current way of working. It has to be done in a sensitive way, but in a way that really brings the Society forward. If we really want young people in the Society, this old model is the first deterrent to that, for example, for younger generations joining a Society with a president might be a scary idea.

**Rob:**

How is it working to have both a president and a general secretary? That already is something unusual for non-profit organizations. Most organizations would not have two leadership roles like that. Corporations even join the role of board chair and CEO to simplify the decision-making structure. So how do you understand that? And what is it like to actually work as, on the one hand, the president, but also with the general secretary?

**Micah:**

It's unique because we have our national society and yet are part of the world society. So Bert Chase is really the representative of the Canadian Society with respect to the world Society. When he goes to the Goetheanum, he represents Canada. He brings back his experience of the world Society to us. That's a great thing and I think the title "General Secretary" is a wonderful, warm title. It doesn't convey any sort of hierarchy or duty other than to be in service as a communicator: somebody who is experiencing and communicating between these two levels of the world Society. And that's something we've noticed when visiting with local members. The connection between them and the world is not so clear. People don't understand that the work they're doing in the world is made possible because of a world Society. It's possible

by the fact that people around the world are also working in the same way. It's like geography doesn't really have a say when we're talking about spiritual work, spiritual effects. Those things transcend distances. If we're working spiritually, we can be influenced by other people's spiritual work as well regardless of nationality. The general secretary has a good important role, and now we need to find the right term for that role which currently is called the 'president'.

**Rob:**

Successive general secretaries have interpreted this role quite differently. When Arie van Ameringen was the general secretary, he was probably the one who was instigating a lot of things. He instigated, for example, the big Ottawa conference. Dorothy LeBaron in her role as president, certainly supported that in lots of ways. But Dorothy did a lot of wonderful work with the website and other things. But she wasn't somebody necessarily instigating major activities in quite the same way. I'm not sure that it's necessary that there be a single way. But it is at least interesting to explore the different ways that people are doing it.

**Micah:**

Well, Arie is just a force of enthusiasm. I think if we put him in any role, it wouldn't matter. Anything he gets involved with he really inspires through his enthusiasm. Being the general secretary at the time helped. It gave him a lot of support for the Ottawa conference, which we've learned was inspirational around the world. The people who came from Europe and the United States experienced a version of Anthroposophy that really was awakening for them. They couldn't

believe it. Paul MacKay's words were "Anthroposophy was in the air." I understand that to mean this was a living forum of Anthroposophy. This work wasn't theoretical, you know, up in the heavens. This was on earth - here. It was perceptible. You couldn't deny it. He was picking up a lot of strong Michaelic energy in the conference.

**Rob:**

Any chance we'll do another one?

**Micah:**

For sure. We need all these stars to line up. I remember in Ottawa, I said the next one should be in Halifax. This led me to the alumni conference idea. But it didn't happen because it didn't have the team that Arie had. Our team was really a two-headed monster. In the end, it was two ideas, two separate initiatives, trying to create one event. There was a bit of hesitancy to become one body and one idea. Also, alumni are hard to reach and to inspire because they are out in the world living their busy lives. It was a hard sell to convince them to come to a conference. One of my hopes is to create more activities in the Society. I'm most vocal about the need for activity and less administration.

**Rob:**

What future activities might you be thinking about?

**Micah:**

We can't come to ideas for activities abstractly. We're very aware an idea can be amplified if there's other people who are excited about it. It's got to resonate with a larger group and then we can say, OK, this is it. The next big project that keeps poking its head out and saying,

you know, this needs to be done, is a teacher training in Nova Scotia. Within the last year there are ten people who want to take the teacher training, and if we had a program here, they would be enrolled. However, they can't make it work financially to go to Toronto so then they just don't do it.

Another thing that we're exploring is community housing development. People can invest in it and then it would provide housing for faculty members, housing for seniors and also rental income for the school. It could eventually be a source of capital funding for practical arts classrooms, for example. We need space for woodwork and metalwork. The students are already asking for this.

**Rob:**

Have you had a chance to go over to the Goetheanum?

**Micah:**

Yes, I've been going to some of the youth conferences. And I was able to attend the AGM in, 2016, the one where the first vote happened regarding Paul MacKay and Bodo von Plato about the continuation of the next seven-year term. There was the whole build up to that. All this fighting about issues connected with their years there. They had been there for over 20 years as first members. And then this experience of having all these local anthroposophists just flood the auditorium for the vote itself. People who hadn't participated in any of the other AGM events, but just came for the vote.

**Rob:**

That was interesting. What did you think of all that?

**Micah:**

I'm a big believer that people do always elect the right people. When it comes to elections, every decision is the right decision for that time. But, of course, we have to live with who we elect. Everything goes back to the individual. If the person we elect is a great person, is a great soul, we know we're going to be better off. If they win the election though because of their strength, through their connections, and they're not such a great person, I think they still deserved it, but we're just going to be a bit disadvantaged. So I agree with the decision. I think the members made the right choice. And every day we move away from that, it seems to be confirming that fact. New possibilities have been created because they are no longer forced on members, because those individuals had become very influential. For example, even physical seating in the auditorium reflected their influence. The people who really supported them were in the first 10 rows of the auditorium. As you moved up towards the back, nobody even knew who they were. And it was good because we could really look at it objectively and say, OK, these are the arguments, you know, how do I feel about this? And then, of course, there were the gasps when the results were read. There were actually gasps from the front rows. They just couldn't believe that Paul Mackay and Bodo von Plato were not reconfirmed. And that showed me that it was an unhealthy situation because as much as we have a connection with people, we also have a responsibility to also see how the other members feel about the people we might like. I think it was a good decision.

**Rob:**

What's come out of it has been very interesting in terms of the way the existing Vorstand has tried to operate. What are your thoughts and perceptions about that?

**Micah:**

They thought they recognized that this is very much a time of transition and there is this cry for a new way of leading, as well as new demands from the world and society that they have to meet. They are going slowly. They're not electing a new Vorstand member until they solve these other challenges. They're putting most of their time into including more of the general secretaries from around the world. They want the general secretaries to take on more of the responsibilities. I don't know practically how it's going to work. It sounds good in theory. General secretaries feel very important, and they are important. But that also invites adversaries. It's always a question of whether the individuals who are the general secretaries are able to work out of service, and not out of any other reason. It's really a role for a diplomatic soul, a soul that doesn't really have any particular attachment to things, but is able to hold many concerns and many responsibilities and make a good decision. I didn't see that at the last AGM, I saw very strong individuals in general secretary roles, which is OK. But it brings a different way of working. I don't know how it's going to work.

**Rob:**

It certainly seems like an interesting time. I mean, they're exploring in Dornach, and you're exploring here with the Council. It certainly seems like a creative time. We're not just mindlessly following governance structures. There

are people who are trying to be awake and alive, like yourself, in terms of figuring out how to do things in a way that's current with this time.

**Micah:**

Yeah, it is an awakening time. And they are listening. If you wrote them an e-mail and said, "Hey, Vorstand, you're doing great work. Consider this." They might not respond. But in my experience, every communication has a little bit of an influence in broadening their perspective.

**Rob:**

So you have a sense they're listening?

**Micah:**

Yeah, they are very much in a listening mode.

**Rob:**

What are your hopes for the Society in Canada?

**Micah:**

My hopes are that there is some renewal in the next few years. I'm a little worried because when we go to all these events, the members are getting very old. I mean, I'm not worried because we always have to accept what is. But I question where this is going. The people who are there made it possible for myself and others to also work elsewhere in the world. The question is, can we inspire the next generation?

**Rob:**

When you say next generation, we're not necessarily talking about just people in their teens and twenties, but people in their 30s and 40s, too, I would imagine. The average age of the Society members in Canada is, I bet, north of sixty five.

*[Editors note: current average age of member who have shared their birthdate is 59]*

**Micah:**

Yes, for sure. And if you look at Europe, it has tons of attendance. The youth conferences get 500 to 800 attendees. They are not all anthroposophists. They're students who feel like going to these conferences, to contribute and benefit, but they're not going to join the Society and that's the way it's supposed to be. You wouldn't want a teenager to join the Society. But certainly when somebody is in their 30s or 40s, you would hope that Anthroposophy is living in them in such a way that they feel a benefit to joining the Society. It has to benefit the individual too, not in an egotistical way, but in a spiritual supportive way.

**Rob:**

One of the things I've noticed is that when I've talked to people, say, around the Toronto branch, about joining the Society they are taking the decision very seriously and not until they feel that they really have a very deep sense of connection to Anthroposophy do they want to join the Society. When I think back to Steiner's day, as far as I can understand from what I've read, joining the Society was an easier thing. Joining the First Class was the more serious decision. You had to be a member for two years and people would really think hard about whether they really wanted to be representative of Anthroposophy in the world. Somehow it seems to have shifted now. And I don't know why, but that's my perception anyway.

**Micah:**

I think part of it is that during Steiner's time there actually were no anthroposophists and that was something that ultimately led to him becoming sick. It was really just him bringing it all, on a one way road. There was nobody who was really able to take it up as we are today, 100 years later. He didn't have a real actively supportive body, in the membership. So that was a big deal for somebody to join the Society back then. Today, Anthroposophy is much more a part of our lives. People say, well, why do I need to join the Society to work with Anthroposophy? Why pay a fee? And there's truth in that as well, you know. Is the Society meeting their needs as well? Of course, there's an egotistical element there. You know, there's a "how do I benefit", which is not the right question, but it is a question many people are asking. We hear it. So I personally connect with what you are saying. This is a serious question. How can I contribute to Anthroposophy in me and the world by joining the Society? And there's the recognition of what it means to join the Society and to represent it which is closely connected to the reason for joining the First Class. The Society is more free, and doesn't have, you know, a school with mantras and formalities.

**Rob:**

So you do have a sense that for the Society to move forward, it needs to find some way of establishing a relationship and bringing younger people in their 20s, 30s, 40s into an active role somehow.

**Micah:**

Yeah, I know these early adults are open. If it speaks to them in the right way, they won't even ask the question

about why. There's an openness that's waiting in the young people. But it's not being recognized and it's not being addressed. One example is creating events like what they're doing in Europe. The Society is creating these accessible conferences as experiences for young people. It understands and carries the wisdom and the understanding of what the experience is going to do for the soul in that individual. And then the soul of the individual recognizes, oh, this is speaking to me. I'm going to have fun and I'm going to benefit. And that's the extent of it. And that's a beautiful thing that the Society is able to do. It makes a connection. It doesn't evoke a membership card, but it creates this wonderful activity and Anthroposophy flows through it.

**Rob:**

And it probably makes sense, I think, to say that, you know, if somebody has gone to several conferences like that over time, they might naturally consider joining the Society and being more involved in the work. That seems to make sense to me.

**Micah:**

Yes there is always that possibility, I also recognize the adults around me, when I was growing up, contributed in order for me to experience what is so meaningful and valuable. Then as an adult, you think, OK, well, now I'm in the adult role. Now I have to give back. Now I have to give a similar experience to the younger generations. I think that's what it means to grow older. We recognize how we contribute towards helping others have similar experiences but in an ever freer and open way because if we want Anthroposophy to live in us as

individuals we need to be as free as possible.

**Rob:**

It's lovely. Geraldine, did you want to add anything? You're in the process of becoming a member.

**Geraldine:**

My experience of the Foundations Studies Encounter Program at the Rudolf Steiner Center Toronto had a profound, profound effect on me. And that was through the teaching of Paul Hodgkins. He had a clear way of giving to the students the essentials of Steiner and making it very easy for us to understand. It lit a fire under you. I had the Gospel of Saint John on my bookshelf for several years. And then, you know, all of a sudden, I started to read it. And then for whatever reason, things started to really go from there. As a child I used to carry around a Bible. I loved the feeling of the pages, if that makes any sense. This friend of mine had taken the Foundation Year herself. Twelve years before. And she recommended that I do it too. Even though I sort of was dragging my feet and making excuses, I'm so glad that I did it.

**Rob:**

When you talk, Geraldine, I hear something that I hear in a lot of people's voices. We have experiences of reading Anthroposophy and doing things. But there's something about Anthroposophy that seems to move from person to person. Somehow somebody touches us, and we may not even understand what they have said, but it awakens some kind of recognition or something.

**Geraldine:**

When a student is ready, you know, a student is ready (laughter)...

**Micah:**

Paul is such a wonderful soul. He brings a playfulness to his teaching and his ideas.

**Geraldine:**

He does. And I remember during coffee breaks, he said to me "You're very curious. Just like me."

**Micah:**

I'm also very curious. I was talking to my mom the other day and I was telling her how the kids at the school ask so many questions. And she said, you did too!

**Geraldine:**

Like I said, when the student is ready...

**Micah:**

That's a little observation about the communication of the heart versus head, because curiosity has to do with our heart. If we're asking questions, that's the language of the heart. The head is more of the answer. If we want to answer something, we're going to Google it. But that's really the end of the question. That's the end of the heart experience. Curiosity is one of the signs that we're on a very deep spiritual path. Do you find that asking a question creates more curiosity, which creates bigger questions?

**Geraldine:**

Yes, you just feel like you're just scraping, scraping the surface of cement. You know what I mean?

**Micah:**

Well, I just got the image that there's this world within us that we're not really conscious of, but something in the outer world awakens us to what's already in us. We just haven't become conscious of it yet, and then our curiosity leads us to it.

**Geraldine:** Christ is so loving, but also he's tough. He's very tough.

**Micah:**

In what sense?

**Geraldine:**

In teaching us about love.

**Micah:**

Can you give one example?

**Geraldine:**

In my own personal life, getting a life threatening disease, that was a real test. And I knew that I was not going to die, but I knew as clear as a bell that this was a test. And I had to go through with it with as much dignity as I could. And I was by myself. I just feel like what's happening now is the same test for everybody, whether they know it or not. You're going to say yes and want to move up the ladder or you're just going to stay where you are. And these days are our battle right now. World War Two was with our parents. But this time is ours.

**Micah:**

That is very interesting. My question with the whole Covid situation is and we know this is the work of these earthly materialistic forces that are shaping the narrative and defining how people understand it. So how do we bring

enlightenment and truth, as you say, that this is a battle within ourselves? It's not about a virus, it's only a symptom of

a spiritual problem. How is it causing us to grow and to awaken? Are we going to give into illusionary aspects of these adversarial powers which have the aim of degrading our humanity? We're going to have to give up closeness, our connection with people, our right to have certain health, liberties and freedoms. Behind all of the outer events is this obvious push for global vaccine mandates, government funding, and social restrictions. And then, of course, the fines and tracking that goes with that, who's actually following through on the mandates and who's not. And then the fear associated with the liability of somebody who's not following the vaccine or physical distancing mandate. So how do we, in a loving way, challenge that narrative? How do we still bring love and truth into the world, but also be a resistance in some way to just following along with it?

**Geraldine:**

There's no place for fear at this time!

**Rob:**

Micah, I really appreciate you taking the time to do this. I wish you all the best as the Council member and president, and I feel how much your heart's in it. And if there's anything I can do to help you, please let me know. I think it's wonderful that you're there.

**Micah:**

Thank you. Those are very sweet words. They were really great questions. I got excited. Thanks.

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## BOOK REVIEW

*Fine Matter*, by Philip Thatcher; (Perceval Books, 2020, direct order at [percevalbooks2001@gmail.com](mailto:percevalbooks2001@gmail.com), \$27 including postage), 102 pages.

*Review by Fred Dennehy*

Owen Barfield, in characterizing the experience of poetry as “a felt change of consciousness,” goes on to pinpoint poetic *pleasure* to be “rarer and more transitory,” something dependent upon the precise moment of change itself. If you pass a coil of wire across two magnetic poles, you will generate a current of electricity, but only during the moment of transition, when the coil is being brought into the lines of force or being taken away. At rest, the current disappears. It is the *movement* that is all important.

The poems in Philip Thatcher's collection *Fine Matter* live and breathe in this movement. They take us through places alive with elemental forces that connect to what is stirring within us just beneath the surface, as well as swimming in the far cosmos. Thatcher's landscapes are northern, of the Pacific Northwest, or Finland, or Russia, or the Canadian Shield, stretching from the sparse provinces of west and central Canada, down to the Great Lakes and up through Hudson Bay to the Arctic and as far east as Greenland. This is geography as old as the Precambrian and as new as the unexplored frontier. His lyrics delight in Native place names like *Kaloloch*, *Naikoon*, *Nunavut*, and in words from the Gitksan people of the



Skeena Watershed of British Columbia - words like *adaawk* (stream of story); *amlax* (Old Salmon); and 'Nax'nihl (listen). Everywhere you encounter *stones*, and along with stones, snow, tundra, and the long snaking fogs of some of the world's most demanding terrain. We feel the challenge of the emptiness, the openness, and the sheer possibility that arises when the familiar is left long behind us.

Thatcher's verse can curve like a river, with rhythmic word recurrences unfolding through narratives of sentient surprise. He is also an accomplished novelist (*The Raven's Trilogy*), and he speaks to us in pitch perfect tones, while refusing to allow his lines to say anything not truly heard. In three poems that follow one another in *Fine Matter*, "Dawn Reconnaissance," "Holy Saturday" and "About Creation," Thatcher conjures an almost preternatural mood of expectancy, sounding along the edges of doubt, through Good Friday, Holy Saturday and into Easter Sunday. When Easter arrives, it is not with the ringing of bells and the unqualified joy of Resurrection, but instead with keener questionings, finer longings:

Borne on the first sharp  
rush of Easter breath  
can I speak only  
words about creation?

Or can I start  
to stammer water to wine  
wine into warm  
living blood?

Transitions of all kinds are recurring themes. Here is a commencement address that I wish had been given to my own graduating class:

FOR THE CLASS OF '92  
Listen between every line  
Jump at  
nothing and doubt  
only what you want  
to hear  
Despise nothing but  
your need to despise  
Know your hands are  
not tied, though  
they may fumble at  
what they love  
yet even the tip  
of a finger can be  
touch enough  
A word may mean  
what it says  
or close enough  
or its opposite  
sounding its own truth  
between the lines -  
Listen

The very last poems in *Fine Matter* unfold almost entirely in a mood of passage. They include "Aging," "This Late Winter Tree," "Towards 81" and the delicately graceful "To the End of the World," reminiscent to me of the delicate sorrow of Antonio Machado.

There are diverse voices here: the intimate admonitions of a spiritual teacher in the selections from *Mask of the Sun*; the calm accepting tones of age for what it knows will have to be; and the taut, controlled sketching of the wonders of frozen, barren vistas. Always there is resonance between outer landscape and inner experience. Thatcher's north can open to hidden events of the past, or to wordless inner discoveries; or to a sudden restoration of purpose and resolve. My own favourite is "An Arctic

Fox Odyssey,” the story of the 3500 kilometre, two and a half month journey of a female fox from Norway to Nunavut, in the Canadian Arctic Circle. We see her losing her trackers as she finds at last an ice bridge to Canada. I suppose there may be better feminist poems, but it is difficult to recall them. Thatcher dedicates this poem to Joan Almon.

The 57 poems of *Fine Matter*, spanning fifty years, are arranged into five collections: “About Creation,” “Along the Edges,” “Turning the Earth,” from *Mask of the Sun*,” and “A Brush of Light.” Revelation is their medium. Don’t deny yourself the experience.

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**NOVEMBER**

## **From the World Society On Uncommon Ground**

Dear Members and Friends of the Anthroposophical Society in Canada,

Every morning each of us enacts a remarkable ritual. We turn back our bedding, place our feet on the floor beside our bed, and stand to face the day. What we do not recognize is that this simple, yet significant process, is based on unrecognized expectations. We expect that the ground beneath our feet will support us. We expect that the relationships we had when we went to sleep will be there to meet us; our tasks in the world will remain unchanged. We trust the garment that gives our lives meaning will be there waiting for us,

that we can put it on and, with it, have our orientation to a new day.

Every day, whether we are conscious of it or not, each of us seeks for the firm ground of what has been. We look back over this year 2020 and, from the vantage point of a little distance, find ourselves uncomfortable, startled. A sense of vertigo comes and, with it, a deep unease. All that has supported us is no longer as it has been. We can observe how, in stages, our ground has shifted, continues to move. In the early months of the year we felt secure. We looked ‘there’ where, from a seemingly safe vantage point, we saw disorder entering human society. The distance soon disappeared and we found these islands of disintegrating social fabric appearing throughout our world - no longer there, but here. But this was in the spring and, despite all of the difficulties facing humanity, the awakening earth gave us assurance that the unease would pass with the season. Summer arrived and with relief we began to have a sense that the edges of ‘normalcy’ were beginning to emerge, providing a sense of the familiar. Yet - a mirage.

As autumn arrived, across the country we began to look for ways of re-establishing our connections with each other. Here and there members groups began to meet again, relieved that we could finally sit together - setting aside the virtual that had for a time supported us. On the one hand, we could appreciate that there had been possibilities to carry on our work at ‘safe distances’. We felt we had found new ways of meeting and were ready to now set aside the experiment and return to the familiar. We appreciated the success of our AGM that had made it possible for

some to participate in ways that had not been possible before. And yet the sense of something incomplete remains. An ache, a deep sense of separation, the ever-present veil of technology between us.

As winter approaches, the temporary relief that summer had provided is evaporating. On every side, the delicate first steps taken toward meeting together again are increasingly being impinged upon. Once again, we feel ourselves on uncommon ground. Though we find ourselves seeking a return to what is familiar, what has nurtured us, we are faced with the uneasy sense that this 'return' may well be a distraction. Are we before a doorway? Is there something new being asked of us that we have not yet perceived? Is the readjustment of our foundations a deep shifting of tectonic plates beneath us,



Sketch by Rudolf Steiner used for the stage curtain of the Mystery Dramas

the structures of our shared life seeking to transform themselves?

As we look back 100 years, we can recognize ourselves in what had occurred then. The structures of human societies were disintegrating. Interrelationships, both individual and societal, that had seemed established and firm, crumbled away. New images of ourselves as human beings, as cultures, were being called for. With reflection, we can recognize within ourselves a deep longing for a 'new way', a new way of discerning the hidden patterns of an emerging new reality. It is as if each morning, when we stand to face our days, the expectations of meeting what has been, masks our capacity to discern these arising patterns.

As if in preparation for these 'points of turning' that were to come with our current age, Rudolf Steiner provides us with many ways of meeting what would bring about transformation. One of the striking images he gives us - a glyph for our time - is the image of a temple, raised up on high ground. A cross and roses hover before it.

As Rudolf Steiner revealed that the essence of the rose is the closest we can come to the nature, the being, of what the human being would become - will become, this image seems to indicate that this temple and its 'rose sign' is one guide for us in our current point of transition. The image was, and still is, huge. It spans the whole of the Goetheanum stage, the image that for 100 years meets those able to attend the Mystery Dramas as they enter the Great

Hall. Is the solid ground upon which the temple stands, that which serves humanity's becoming? Is what this image rises to reveal with each of the dramas, what gives us a new orientation, new meaning, each new day? Is the consciousness of the community we have chosen before birth, the substance of our former lives, to be the foundation - built life after life - the solid ground given to us now to stand upon? A new centre of gravity.

Can we begin to perceive the incomprehensible significance of the person beside us, the person before us? Can we begin to apprehend that in this mutual recognition we begin to weave the living fabric of life as it can become? In this, can we begin to experience the extraordinary strength of the new ground we long to become conscious of? Are these the foundations of a new way of standing to meet each new day?

With warm regards

Bert Chase  
General Secretary for Canada

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Dear members of the Anthroposophical Society,

We greet you all warmly from the Goetheanum, wherever you are in the world, and use this means of communication for staying in touch with you!

The Goetheanum Leadership would like to encourage the development of a better understanding of and an informed approach to the current challenges by presenting a series of ten lectures under the heading **The Signature of Our Time**. The lectures will be available on video,

in German and with English interpretation, and can be accessed from this week onwards by visiting the website. They are presented live at the Goetheanum every Monday up until Christmas and each lecture will be available one week later on video. As a first contribution Georg Soldner, deputy head of the Medical Section, spoke from the medical perspective on the subject of Covid-19 - What Medicine Can Learn from the Pandemic. Please let people around you know about these lectures.

On 31 October 2020 at 9 a.m. the 2020 **Annual General Meeting** of the General Anthroposophical Society will start at the Goetheanum.

the General Anthroposophical Society will start at the Goetheanum.

The meeting, which had to be postponed from April, will be reduced to one day only. Because of the far-reaching travel restrictions, we will livestream the AGM in both German and English. If you wish to attend, please visit the Goetheanum website and choose 'Login' at the top right of your screen. Once you have registered, you can click on 'Newsletter' and subscribe to receiving reminders of the streaming to make sure you don't miss it.

Information on the programme and the starting times of the various broadcasts will be sent out on time. Recordings will become available a few days after the event. Once you have logged in on the Goetheanum website you can also access all the documents related to this year's AGM.

Keep your fingers crossed for this weekend's sold-out performance of Goethe's **Faust parts 1 and 2**, scheduled to go ahead with an audience of 800 (with masks). The next opportunity to

see this drama of humanity at the Goetheanum will only be in July 2021.

We hope you are well, given the circumstances. We feel that we are connected with you in our anthroposophical work across the world.

Warm greetings,

Justus Wittich, Joan Sleigh, Constanza Kaliks, Matthias Girke and Ueli Hurter, who is still to be confirmed as a member of the Executive Council.

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## The Importance of Branch and Group Life

The Parzival Group in Kelowna BC

On many occasions, Rudolf Steiner pointed to branch/group life as a new form of sister-brotherhood. When individuals of different races, destinies, genders, professions, points of view come together periodically to study esoteric truths or do artistic activities or plan anthroposophical events, something can



light up through the bonds of soul-to-soul. We can “awaken” to each other.

This work is valuable if we can work with others who think differently. We can train ourselves to give full recognition to them as authors of their own destinies. We can leave them free to structure their thoughts which are appropriate to them as the bearers of their pre-earthly existence. In branch life, we can learn to bow in reverence to the mystery of the other. Agitation kills anthroposophy, says Steiner.<sup>1</sup> Our words must reflect not the propagandist’s attempt to persuade, but our pure and single-minded attempt to express the Spirit. We can show interest in each other’s point of view; we can carry questions over the days and nights between meetings and also look for the common ground from which the group can proceed.

While working together this way, the thoughts and feelings of these assembled individuals are raised into the supersensible. Our work together can become an

offering to the divine creative powers, to whom we owe our existence. The spiritual hierarchies become interested

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<sup>1</sup> Rudolf Steiner, *The Life, Nature and Cultivation of Anthroposophy* (letters to members), January 27, 1924

in us when we try to work together out of anthroposophy. When we develop empathy for others, when we recognize and work with spiritual impulses that want to unite with our ideals and when we develop freedom of thought and allow others to do the same, we prepare for the future epoch.<sup>2</sup>

Steiner believed that everyone who goes to an anthroposophical meeting should have the feeling that he will find more than if he merely studies anthroposophy on his own.

In studying anthroposophy on one's own, the truths of existence are revealed. In participating in groups and branches of the Anthroposophical Society, it is the *life* that is cultivated.<sup>3</sup>

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## DECEMBER

### From the World Society On Darkness's Sun

Dear Members and Friends of the Anthroposophical Society in Canada,

With each new day we have come ever closer to the heart of winter. The rising light comes ever later; the approaching darkness comes sooner. This closing in of the darkness at first comes imperceptibly. Then with each day the advance comes with increasing rapidity. We become more conscious that the



Hermann Linde (detail)

space given to us to experience the light is ever more measured.

This enveloping of the light by darkness has its inner accompaniment. This too, at first, is concealed for us. Gradually our souls become increasingly shrouded, enveloped, and we draw back from this inner experience, this approaching night in our souls. The familiarity, the safety, of our daily engagements abandon us. Our accustomed activities that keep our lives busy lose their immediacy. The structures of our accustomed lives lose their importance. What gives meaning to our daily lives recedes.

This seeming loss of purpose, accompanied by the withdrawal of outer

<sup>2</sup> See more on this subject: Rudolf Steiner, *How Anthroposophical Groups Prepare for the Sixth Epoch*, June 15, 1915

<sup>3</sup> Steiner, *The Life, Nature and Cultivation of Anthroposophy*, February 3, 1924



light, is unsettling. We lose our bearings. What has given shape to our daily lives loses its form, and this loss has its inner soul reflection. This disconnection from what gives our daily lives their orientation becomes a loss of meaning for us. This time of outer darkness is also a time of inner loss: of sadness, even disorientation.

This annual experience of retreating light, both outer light and its accompanying inner reflection, has been heightened throughout this year. This advancing darkness, this impingement of darkness on that place where we feel safe, has taken hold of human society. Over these past months it has become ever more difficult to feel ourselves as 'standing in the light'.

Rudolf Steiner reveals how this experience of being bound by darkness is a critical step on our path toward becoming truly human. Wonder can take hold of us as he describes how in the ancient mysteries the student was led into darkness, a deep sense of loss, even despair - and in this enveloping darkness comes the delicate, almost imperceptible presence of radiance, of light permeating the darkness. The coming of the Sun at night's darkest point.

Each year we are given the possibility to not turn away from this gift of the darkness. We need not descend into holding fast the accustomed structures of life. We can open ourselves to where this withdrawing of the light would lead us. This unaccustomed place, this place where we are without our accustomed supports, is where we are allowed to become part of the narrative of king and shepherd. Here we are given the

possibility, through them, to sense the first glimmers of the invisible inner light, this radiant sun presence shining through all substance.

Speaking to a circle of young people, Rudolf Steiner calls upon them to recognize that the perception of this inner light is an ever-present possibility. Its presence is concealed because we do not attend to it. This wondrous inner radiance illumines with such delicacy that the heaviness of our accustomed sense perceptions conceal it. But we do have the soul capacities with which to discern it. It is to this that Rudolf Steiner calls us. We have these experiences; he calls us to recognize them. To cultivate this recognition is profoundly important.

How do these spiritual intimations communicate themselves to us? What soul capacities convey the delicate illumination that shines through substance to light up within us?

In speaking of the ancient mysteries, Rudolf Steiner elaborates how the one prepared for initiation is guided into the darkness, and in this darkness is led to the reality of the sun at midnight, permeating all substance. The world's substance, our own substance. It was out of this experience that one of the most profound activities of the mysteries evolved, the ennoblement of substance, the lifting up of the world's body - to spiritualise matter. It is this raising up of the elements that becomes the sacred practicing we call art. This development of the arts is inseparable from the development of the mysteries for it is the arts that prepare the soul for recognizing the permeation of the material world by spiritual radiance shining through matter. It is the

blooming of aesthetic experience in the soul that in the sense world we experience as being in the presence of beauty. Beauty and spiritual radiance through substance are compliments. For Rudolf Steiner this 'creating forms as an expression of inner life' was central to all his creative endeavors. The practice of art is the bridge. When we truly grasp the centrality of artistic cultivation for humanity's future, we can begin to understand how much is undermined by removing art from life.

One of the most devastating effects of our current situation is that this 'creating forms as an expression of inner life' has been crippled. The musician is silenced, the theater closed. Our cultural institutions have profoundly suffered this year. Recognizing this, the Goetheanum has made intensive efforts to continue supporting artists and their work. This past summer, despite all of the restrictions in place, the Goetheanum was committed to continue its artistic work. Working closely with local authorities it was the only major stage that continued to function in central Europe, proceeding with a full program of Goethe's 'Faust'. The Section for Visual Arts also mounted a significant show, 'Into the Unknown: Art in the Times of Corona virus'. Twenty-eight artists participated, their work filling the Goetheanum's public spaces.

As we immerse ourselves in the celebrations at mid-winter, can we sense that the walls of encircling darkness ask us to attend ever more closely to that inner light that would reveal itself to us? Is this a time of practice, of preparation? As Christmastide mantles us, can we recognize that at the heart of all we seek is a deep, profound aesthetic

experience that unites us with the world of divine presence that draws near to us? Can we apprehend that at this special time in the year, but also in the extraordinary conditions of this moment in time, it is in our active beholding of this inner radiance-within-darkness that creates the bridge between matter and spirit?

Bert Chase

General Secretary for Canada

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## **From the Goetheanum**

Dear members, dear friends,

The AGM on 31 October took place with special protective measures in place, because five days before, the canton of Solothurn, where the Goetheanum is located, decided that the maximum number of persons attending public assemblies was 30. The question then was whether the AGM should be held or cancelled. We decided to go ahead and to admit around 140 members. They were spread out across five rooms, with a maximum of 30 people in each, and connected via livestream so they could be aware of each other. Questions related to proceedings could be asked from all the rooms and a transparent and valid voting process was also possible. The meeting was also attended remotely by a few hundred members who were, however, unable to participate actively.

**Facilitating the perception of Anthroposophy**



The format of this meeting was new for everyone involved and illustrated once again what we have experienced many times in this extraordinary year of 2020: that the Anthroposophical Society is a public society and the Goetheanum a public building. Do we want this publicity? The answer of the Executive Council and the Goetheanum Leadership to this question is a clear 'yes' and they have embraced it actively since the lockdown in spring 2020. We want to keep the Goetheanum and Anthroposophy in the public domain - by applying Covid regulations responsibly and by keeping the building 'physically' as open as possible. We strive for Anthroposophy to be publicly perceived, for instance with the book Perspectives and Initiatives in the Times of Coronavirus, which was put together within four weeks and published at the end of May, with contributions from all the Sections; or with the lecture series The Signature of Our Time, which is publicly available on video. We want to make the Anthroposophical Society and the Goetheanum publicly accessible when we offer conferences, meetings and performances.

Our time, the earth and humanity are faced with challenges and we want to make contributions out of anthroposophy that can help develop ways of meeting these challenges.

Warm greetings,

Ueli Hurter, Goetheanum

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## Mediators For Initiates?

By Mark McAlister



Mark McAlister  
Consultants Certificate from The Institute for Management Consultants

*Members should consciously make themselves mediators between what the questioning human soul feels as the problems of man and the universe, and what the Initiates have to recount.*

This quote is from a Letter by Rudolf Steiner to members of the Anthroposophical Society, dated 13 July 1924. Elsewhere in this letter, he describes how the Initiate is able to discern *moral laws of the soul* which are intimately connected with the

happenings of everyday life. Steiner challenges us to take this into account when we try to solve problems in the world.

To some, this may sound dogmatic – *Herr Doktor hat gesagt* (*The Doctor says*) – but here is another way of looking at it. Acknowledging the existence of factors that will always be beyond our control is the first step in any decision-making process. (Management consultant Peter Senge writes about this extensively in his landmark book, *The Fifth Discipline*.)

In other words, Steiner is asking us to be *mediators*. This requires a high level of critical thinking, and the ability to take multiple – often conflicting – points of view into account. Gradually, we can then learn to form imaginations which allow spiritual forces to stream into our initiatives.

Each of us will take up Steiner's challenge in different ways, according to our vocation. In my career as a business communications consultant, I kept coming back to a central theme: *Understand your audience and engage with them – and pay attention to the new social forms that emerge*. In this article, I will share some of my stories.

My first full-time job was at Rudolf Steiner Press in London in the late 1970s. We had an ambitious plan to create a catalogue of trade editions, and to promote its sale in the public book

trade. We were all very excited – but one day at a team meeting, I found myself saying, *This is all very good, but who's going to do the selling?* There was an awkward silence in the room, and perhaps you can guess what happened next!

Yes, I became the Trade Rep, and spent my days traipsing around London trying to place our books in stores. Needless to say, this was pretty challenging, and the business results were modest. However, the encounters with booksellers were often quite stimulating. *Excuse me, Ma'm. I see you have some Waldorf books on the Witchcraft shelves. Might I suggest that you also stock them in your Education and Parenting section?* I also remember visiting the Bookshop in the *Tate Gallery*, and showing (with some trepidation) a copy of Steiner's *Colour* lectures to the Buyer. To my astonishment, he ordered a stack of copies without even opening the sample. He just loved the Geissberger watercolour on the cover!

During those three years, I spoke with dozens of booksellers as well as customers at book fairs. Listening to them, and learning about their perspectives on the needs of the reading public, my own relation to Steiner's work began to shift and evolve.

In 1980, I was back in Toronto, looking for work. Here is an excerpt from the *Career Goals* section of my Resumé:

*...the rapid deployment of word-processing and media technology has outstripped the development of writing and communication skills in many companies and organizations. New concepts are not broadly understood within an organization, or are not conveyed successfully to the market...*

I was soon hired by SYSDOC International Inc., a technical writing firm. I was promoted to General Manager, and oversaw all aspects of the business. Our informal slogan was, *motivate people to act*. The primary purpose of a computer manual (or on-line documentation) is not to explain computers – it's all about helping people to do their jobs. Most of the staff had Arts backgrounds, and we fought like hell to protect and cultivate the English language.

Aside from Robert Massoud wandering in from the street and trying to sell me furniture, I did not meet any anthroposophists in the course of my day. However, the work of Rudolf and Marie Steiner was always in the background for me. This meditation was particularly helpful:

*In present earthly Time, Man needs renewed spiritual content in the words he speaks.  
For of the spoken word Man's soul and spirit  
during the time outside the body while he sleeps  
retain whatever is of spiritual value.  
For sleeping man needs to reach out*

*into the realm of the Archangeloi for conversation with them;  
and they can only receive the spiritual content -  
never the material content of the words.*

*Failing such conversation,  
Man suffers harm in his entire being.*

- Rudolf Steiner, from a letter to Marie Steiner, March 1923
- Translated by George Adams

My engagement with the National Research Council (1996-2005) was full of rich experiences. Again, encounters with anthroposophists were few and far between, but that didn't make the work any less *spiritual*. Although you may find this hard to believe, the home page on their website carried the following inscription:

*The sole aim of science is the glorification of the human spirit.*

I was asked to build the Ontario portion of the *Canadian Technology Network*, and the task was to ensure that tech entrepreneurs in smaller cities had access to the best available business and financial resources. I incorporated *Warm Handshakes Inc.*, and started traveling back and forth across the Province. I recruited several dozen municipal economic development officers, and launched a series of meetings and conferences with local tech entrepreneurs. We learned about their business plans, and brought some

of the missing pieces (management consulting, finance, Internet tools...) to the table.

One of my informal slogans was *Culture Leads, Commerce Follows*. We recognized a wide range of factors that benefited businesses, including schools, libraries, academic institutes, research organizations, art projects and so on. Of course the will of the entrepreneur is always a critical element, but she can't do it all by herself.

During this period, I was helped by Steiner's *Motto Of The Social Ethic*:

*It is only wholesome when...  
In the mirror of the Human Soul,  
The whole community takes shape  
And in the community,  
lives the strength of the individual soul*  
- Translation by James Gillen

These examples give one perspective on what it means to be a mediator: helping people to understand a wider audience, and to get engaged with it. New doors open for them, and they can meet the words of Initiates in their own way.

I'll close with this quote from Peter Senge:

*Merlin united the knights in the circle of the Round Table, and then scattered them forth again on the paths of their several transformations. Though the knights travel their separate paths, they*

*are united in a common bond, and their paths, though predestined for each one of them alone, will meet, cross and intertwine.*

> Adapted from a passage in *The Fifth Discipline*, Ch. 18

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## **Dear members of the Anthroposophical Society in Canada**

We are pleased to announce that Claudette Leblanc has accepted the position of Administrator. She will be replacing Christine Tansley who has been filling in for Jeffrey Saunders for the past year.

Claudette has been involved with the Society for many years. Prior to joining the council as representative for Quebec in 2018 she was very involved as Registration Co-ordinator for the 2016 Ottawa conference.

As Administrator she brings a wealth of experience directing and managing a company shared with her late husband for many years. She is also the steward for the Montreal Branch and head of a study group in Montreal.

Claudette is committed to serving the Anthroposophical Society in Canada and its members to the best of her ability



