

October 13, 2022

Dear friends,

As a followup to an email that you should have received in the last day or two from the core Pioneer Valley Christian Community group (an affiliate of the Taconic / Berkshire Church located in Hillsdale, NY), I am very pleased to announce to the Pioneer Valley community that I will be working with you as your priest.

I look forward to meeting you at one of our upcoming services – perhaps as soon as Saturday, October 22, 2022 at 10:30 AM, at the North Hadley Congregational Church. Please see the attached document for the schedule of services over the next several months.

By way of this email, I would like to introduce myself to you: I was born in the Midwest, near Chicago, and lived there for the first 46 years of my life. Over 25 years ago, I left my work in the corporate world as an accountant and as a computer network manager and became a biodynamic vegetable grower. Since that time, in 1995, I worked long and hard in all facets of community supported agriculture (CSA). In 2007, after Lora, my partner of 7 years died in a car accident, I found my way into the Christian Community as I sought to integrate this loss into my life and to support Lora in her life in the spiritual world. In 2010, I moved to the East coast, to Harlemville / Ghent, NY to work at Hawthorne Valley Farm. At HVF I managed a 2.5 acre intensive small scale vegetable garden – helping to educate apprentices on biodynamic growing with 2-wheel walk behind tractors as we grew vegetables for the on-farm store and for farmers' markets. I had intended in 2019 to start my own garden/farm but in late 2018 I injured both of my knees and stepped back to re-evaluate my next step. It was out of a sacrament of consultation, that the possibility of attending the Seminary and becoming a Christian Community priest was born. My knees soon completely healed. Amidst all of the challenges of the recent pandemic, I was blessed to study at the Christian Community Seminary in Toronto, Canada and to receive the Sacrament of Ordination this last May, 2022. I have been sent to work with the Taconic / Berkshire region during the week and with the Boston Congregation on the weekends. I now live in nearby Ghent, NY with my partner, Monica Talaya Amstutz. I am excited to be coming to the Pioneer Valley on a monthly basis.

Since it's been a while since the Act of Consecration has been celebrated in the Pioneer Valley, I have been encouraged to mention how it will likely unfold – with consideration for the world new circumstances. I will not be wearing a mask – while for all others, masks are at their option. Communion will be done like it always has been. After the communion prayers, the priest experiences the communion, and with the priest, all who are present share a part of it (though not physically, of course) through each individual's connection to the Angel of the Congregation, perhaps the true celebrant of which we are all a part. After the priest, then one is given the option to come to the foreground and approach the altar by standing in a row to receive communion themselves, should they so choose. If one comes forward, one is encouraged to participate in all three aspects of the communion (with the removing of one's mask, if one is being worn, at the key moments): the sharing of the bread and body, the sharing of the cup, and the receiving of the peace. One need not be a member of the church to receive communion but one should at least be past the age of confirmation (14 years-old).

If you wish to inquire about the children's service, set up a consultation, or need to contact me for any other reason, my telephone number is 815-540-7774 and my email is rbower@thechristiancommunity.org – please call, text, or email.

Thank you and I hope to meet you soon,
Warm Regards

Rev. Robert Bower

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The Christian Community – Movement for Religious Renewal
Brookline/Boston, MA; Greenfield NH; Freeport, ME
The Taconic/Berkshire Region in NY/MA; Pioneer Valley, MA;
Burlington, VT; Camphill Copake, NY