

FUNERAL SERVICE

FOR

CHRISTOPHER FREW

(1952 - 2005)

June 18th, 2005

### **Minister (Colin Lambert): Introduction**

On this late Spring morning, we gather in loving presence, to honor and celebrate the life of our dear friend, husband, father, son and brother Christopher, and we try to express our deep gratitude for having shared the graciousness of his living and the beauty of his work.

Christophers' passing, like the passing of each dear friend, has reminded us that the Gods have bestowed upon us each, lives of only certain length and opportunity ... numbered breaths to return the divine embrace. Christopher was a member of our Fellowship for 31 years. His quiet devotion to his beloved family and his uncomplicated profound gratitude for our teacher and our blessed school were major landmarks of his rich psychological landscape.

All of those who knew you and loved you, thank you. May we stand for a moment of silent presence...

Omar Khayyam wrote:

Come fill the Cup, and in the Fire of Spring  
The winter garment of repentance fling:  
The bird of time has but a little way to fly  
And lo! The bird is on the wing

### **Musical Interlude: Carolien**

*Handel: Lascia Ch 'io Pianga (Stop My Suffering)*

### **Reading: Michael Bishop**

"On the Day I Die" - Rumi

On the day I die, when I am being carried  
Toward the grave, don't weep. Don't say,  
He's gone! He's gone! Death has nothing  
To do with going away. The sun sets and  
The moon sets, but they're not gone. Death is a coming together. The tomb  
Looks like a prison, but it is really  
Release into union. The human seed goes  
Down in the ground like a bucket into  
The well where Joseph is. It grows and  
Comes up full of some unimagined beauty. Your mouth closes here and  
immediately Opens with a shout of joy there

## **Eulogy: (Michael Golding)**

Christopher and I were friends, in the way that all of us in the Fellowship are dear to one another, but our real friendship began in the last year, while he was working with the illness that took his life a week ago today. As I spent time with Christopher, I was deeply moved by his simplicity, and his openness about what he was experiencing. It occurred to me during this time that each of us has something different to teach our community with his or her death, and Christopher's lesson was in his simplicity. At first I thought how remarkable it was that Christopher was so lacking in self-pity. And then I understood that it was not that he had no self-pity, but rather that he was dedicated, throughout his last days, to transforming his self-pity into self-remembering. As Christopher faced what we all face, I saw the warm, gentle being I knew transformed into a hero. Emily Dickinson's words come to mind:

"We never know how high we are  
Till we are asked to rise

And then if we are true to plan  
Our statures touch the skies.

I've learned a few things about Christopher's life in the past week. That he was born in Miami, Florida. That he grew up with two families of brothers and sisters in the tropics, often spending time in the Bahamas, where his father, James, has property. According to his mother, Susanne Elliot, once Christopher made it through the terrible one and a half s, he settled down and became a kind and loving child.

Christopher's Fourth Way quest began at the age of eighteen when he found Ouspensky's *In Search of the Miraculous* on his mother's bookshelf. When he met Marcia at Bard College, a year later, this was the book he brought out to show her. He often referred to this first meeting as something very big, as something that he knew was fate. Two years later they found and joined The Fellowship of Friends in Hawaii.

Life after that was constant change. He learned to be adaptive and creative, had many jobs such as painting houses, being a door-to-door salesman, even selling candles with Marcia on the streets of Berkeley in order to survive as they moved to California, the heart of the school at Apollo, and then out to Open centers in Chicago and Denmark. Marcia gave birth to Laura and Alicia, whose love and friendship were one of

the most treasured things in his life. The last time I saw Christopher he said to me, "It's wonderful when your children become adults. A whole new level of experience becomes possible with them."

Christopher's play is also about Marcia, and she has been a teacher for us as well. In her simplicity and her directness. In the way that she has consistently reached for the Work throughout, always reminding those who came to spend time with Christopher that this was not a tragedy, that Christopher's whole life had led up to this moment when his soul would take flight. The following are some thoughts from Marcia:

Christopher loved life. He loved living. He loved his family, he loved to play, he loved adventure, he loved to be in the midst of a challenge. Whether in a difficult or an ordinary circumstance, he would test, probe curiously, see what would happen, push it further, test again, and work with the results. Free, without restraints, ignoring all artificial rules, his strong essence went right to the core to see and play with the truth he found there. Truth and essence were the foundation of Christopher's relationships.

The transformation of suffering into a higher state was the hallmark of Christopher's last two years. Almost every day, no matter how terrible the night before had been, no matter what he was struggling with then, he would look outside and with wholehearted appreciation say, "What a beautiful day!"

Christopher's passing was swift and profound. Robert said that his soul is in a good place, that there was no doubt about it, and that for one who is so bright inside a body with so much suffering, there is no death. His love and gratitude for his Teacher, and for the work, are beautifully expressed in this letter to Robert, written in January of this year, which Marcia will read for us:

Dear Robert,

Thank you for the efforts you have made to lift us all out of the darkness of the machine and into the worlds at the edge of Paradise. You have created a school out of ancient knowledge, persistent effort and love for us. Your love for us is our most precious gift and continues to lift us up, focus our strength and bring all to the precious moments where one makes the choice to be or not to be.

On a personal note, thank you for helping me transform my pain into

presence, self-pity into self-remembering, and for helping me know who the self is and who it is not. As my play unfolds, I am continually left with a profound gratitude that I can go through a play like this with you, a real School, and friends who know what to value and how to love. There are very few who are as privileged as I have been.

With all my love, Christopher

**Reading: Catherine Lambert**

The Stairway of Existence  
We Are not

In pursuit of formalities Or fake religious  
Laws,  
For through the stairway of existence  
We have come to God's Door.

We are

People who need to love, because Love is the soul's life.

Love is simply creation's greatest joy.  
Through

The stairway of existence,  
O, through the stairway of existence, Hafiz,  
Have

You now come,

Have we all now come to the Beloved's  
Door?

**Musical Interlude: Carolien Van Straten**

*From Bach: "If you are with me, I will go with joy"*

**Minister (Colin Lambert): Close**

In Psalms 90 it is written:

We spend our years as a tale *that is told*

The days of our years *are* threescore years and ten; and if by reason of strength *they be* fourscore years, yet *is* their strength labor and sorrow;

for it is soon cut off, and we fly away. So teach *us* to number our days,  
that we may apply *our* hearts unto wisdom

We will no longer encounter Christopher at Sunday morning meetings, nor elsewhere glimpse his kind smile and soft eyes, yet, he quietly became part of who we are and when we look deep, we will always see him. His simple, certain love of the Gods, his teacher, his school and his treasured family, has taught and inspired us.

Always, we will remember his blessed role and now, we tenderly release him.

May we each succeed in the transformation of our loss, and gain thereby, the sacred state of accepting presence.

**AT THE CEMETERY:**

**MUSIC:** *Fabio (plays pastoral ambient music, at a distance, as friends arrive to the grave side. When signaled he walks to join the funeral party while playing. His arrival at the grave side marks the beginning of the interment ceremony.)*

**READING: Laura Frew**

My Dad. My dear Dad.

Here were are on the mountaintop, to  
celebrate you. Six strong and beautiful  
men

Lower a coffin into the earth.

Your body-a beautiful, complicated creation-

Born; nourished; strengthened;

weakened; and now dead Lies in clothes

carefully pressed by your dear wife.

It was quietly laid in a coffin of polished cherry wood.

We, your dear friends, stand here together. We radiate  
with love for you. But look around you.

My father is not in there.

Dad, I fell you on the breeze.

The breeze that kisses my cheek and plays  
with my hair. The whisper of raindrops  
falling on leaves speaks to me.

The sunshine embraces me with its warmth, calling my heart out to  
play.

Today on this wild mountaintop I want to remember not your  
body, but your life Full of color and light.

Today my heart must not tighten  
with fear. Today my heart will  
learn to grow.

**Musical Interlude:** Noah Horstock

**Minister (Colin Lambert): Interment**

Reading: Ecclesiastes 12:7

And the LORD God formed man *of* the dust of the ground, and  
breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a  
living soul

*(continuing as the casket is lowered)*

*Reading: Genesis 2:7*

Then shall the dust return to the earth as it was: and the  
spirit shall return unto God who gave it.

[the basket of fresh rose petals are offered to the Minister who  
sprinkles a handful of petals into the grave, the basket is  
passed to the family to do the same.]

**READING: John Graham**

*Last Invocation from Walt*

*Whitman* At the last,  
tenderly,

From the walls of the powerful, fortress'd house,  
From the clasp of the knitted locks-from the keep of the well-  
closed doors,  
Let me be wafted.

Let me glide noiselessly forth;  
With the key of softness unlock the  
locks-with a whisper, Set open the  
doors, O Soul!

Tenderly! Be not impatient!  
(Strong is your hold, O  
mortal flesh! Stronger is  
your hold, O love.)

**Minister (Colin Lambert): Conclusion**

Let us go now, in presence, that we may continue to honor our dear friend and celebrate the gift of life that the Gods have yet allotted to each of us, *returning to the present while yet we may.*