

DE TRINITATE

Newsletter of the Society of the Holy Trinity
Societas Trinitatis Sanctae

From The Senior

As I write this article, we are nearing the middle of our Lenten journey. Each year we begin that journey with ashes, hear again the penitential psalms, engage in our Lenten disciplines of prayer, fasting and almsgiving and look toward the completion of our journey at the empty tomb. But apart from all these Lenten practices, I love this season because it is always for me a time of deep reflection. True, I “think” about things at other times of the year, but Lent is when I enter into a time of deeper reflection – pondering my life, my relationship with God and my faithfulness. And each year, particularly as I age and enter the final portion of my life here on earth, I find this time of Lenten reflection becoming deeper, more profound, more honest and more challenging, particularly as I look back over my life and also forward to God’s future. Living with a progressive disease as I am, I am striving to learn more about living in the moment, to trust in God for the goodness of each day, to surrender my life, my being, more fully to Him in this place and time – all things which are hard for me who, I will confess it, likes to be in control. Learning to let go and trust completely in God has been a life-long struggle for me and remains so to this day...and probably will be till the day I die.

But this Lent I have also been spending more time reflecting upon the future of our Society. Brought into being by the power of the Holy Spirit 25 years ago, we have grown and changed as a body within the life of the One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church. It has not been an easy journey and we have faced some real, even existential, issues along the way. But having observed our Silver anniversary I believe we are now called to enter into a time of serious reflection. Guided by that same Spirit that called us into being and rooting ourselves in a life of prayer through the Daily Offices, we are called to enter into this reflection in order to seek God’s will for our future.

And that process began most recently at the Leadership Council retreat held in South Carolina last month. With almost all deans and officers in attendance we not only conducted the “business” of our Order but also began a process of looking toward our future. And to do that we utilized the six points of reflection that Dr. Richard Johnson STS had shared with us at the anniversary dinner in Mundelein last year. While laying out our history over 25 years, Dr. Johnson also challenged us with these six reflections about our future. With these points in hand, we developed a series of questions, each of which led to discussion at the Leadership Council. I am grateful for the reflective discussion which followed and for the sense of direction it gave us. Now I believe we are called to take those reflections and spend more time with each of them so that we can discern God’s call for us. Some of them remain challenges that are inescapable e.g. while in recent years more younger members have subscribed to our Rule, the fact that we are still largely “graying” is obvious and cannot be denied. How then do we structure and organize our retreats when we have increased numbers of our members who are more physically challenged? And if they cannot attend retreats, how do we ensure that they are regularly visited, prayed with and supported, so that they remain an active part of our body in Christ?

So in the remainder of this Lenten season, I invite you to enter with me into a deeper time of reflection about our Society, into a time of prayer for our Society and into a time of discernment

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for our future. May the living God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit guide us along His way in all things and into His future.

~ The Rev'd Paddy Rooney, STS, Senior

Other Actions of the Leadership Council

Apart from the issues outlined by the Senior in his article, the Leadership Council also conducted the following business:

1. Approved a budget for 2023-24 which left the dues for members at \$330.
2. Discussed some practical matters regarding the General Chapter retreat in 2023 including our inability to use Joseph and Mary retreat house resulting in everyone having to be in the main building; ending the social time with wine and cheese since it was becoming prohibitively expensive, and finalizing the theme for our teaching theologians.
3. The Council also approved the theme for 2024 which will be On the Office of the Holy Ministry. The Rt. Rev'd Dr. William Willimon will be our teaching theologian.
4. Reviewed and approved by consensus a document on the duties and responsibilities of the Deans. While our Rule states some of the work undertaken by the Deans, the role has grown and changed over the years and hence it felt appropriate to have a more complete summary of duties and responsibilities so that those who are newly elected would have some idea of the expectations and those electing members to that office would also be better informed.
5. The Society received a significant bequest in excess of \$100,000 from one of our deceased members. We have invested those monies into our Founder's Fund. With that addition our Founder's Fund has enough resources to make a draw of some \$15,000 a year to be available for use in our Society. The Council discussed ways in which those funds could be used including supporting pastors in small congregations with resources for continuing education, assisting younger pastors in some creative ways and so on. Deans will solicit ideas for creative use of these resources and forward them to the Senior.
6. The Council also approved the disbursement of funds from the Seminarian fund. Eight students will each receive checks for \$3,500 thereby totaling \$28,000.

The General Chapter Retreat 19-21 September 2023

We will gather in General Chapter in September this year. Our theme will be "The Creeds: Catechetical and

Doxological." The Reverend Dr. Paul Hinlicky will address the first part and The Reverend Dr. Amy Schiffrin, STS will address the second. We can look forward to some insightful and challenging presentations from both speakers. On Wednesday evening we will turn our attention to a discussion on the book "Credo for Today" by Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger, later His Holiness Pope Benedict XVI. We are asking all members to read the book in advance. Since his death, however, works by the late pope are hard to come by and those that are available are very expensive. Some versions are available on line at a much cheaper rate and you are asked to pursue the following sites for a copy:

Amazon (Kindle Reader).....	\$14.99
Barnes and Noble (Nook Reader)	\$14.99
Verbum.Com (free Verbum Reader).....	\$13.99
Logos.com (free Logos Reader).....	\$13.99
Ignatius Press (original publisher and downloadable copy).....	\$12.97
Google Play	\$19.95
GoodReads (Kindle version)	\$14.99

Our discussion will be led by Fr. Emery deGaal, Ph.D, S.T.L. who serves as the chairs of the departments of Dogmatic Theology and Pre-theology at the Seminary. He studied in Germany and now also teaches an elective course at the seminary on the theology of Pope Benedict XVI. Again we look forward to a lively presentation and discussion so plan to join us for the General Chapter Retreat in September.

A New Editor

The Rev'd Katie Johnson, STS has edited our newsletter for some while now. But parish and home responsibilities are demanding more of her time so she asked to step down from that position. I am grateful for all the work that Katie has done on our behalf. Her attention to detail, her follow-up and her professionalism were obvious to all. We all owe her a debt of gratitude and a simple thank you seems inadequate. Nevertheless, thank you Katie.

The Rev'd Jeff Cottingham, STS, Dean of the Central Plains chapter offered to step up and take over the duties of editor and for that I am grateful. And pursuant to our Rule, I have thus appointed him to fill this role until the next election for Senior in 2024. Please assist Jeff as he settles in with these new responsibilities.

~ The Rev'd Senior Paddy Rooney, STS

Chapter Updates

The **Carolinas Chapter** began to study the Marks of the Church in 2022, studying each mark at each of the three annual Chapter retreats. The Chapter gathered most recently in Lent Retreat over March 6-7 to begin study of the 2nd Mark of Holy Baptism using A.C. Piepkorn's essay "The Lutheran Understanding of Baptism: A Systematic Summary" led by the Rev'd Samuel Zumwalt, STS. 18 members and Inquirers were in attendance at the Catholic Conference Center in Hickory, NC. The Rev'd Nathan Hooks, STS served as Celebrant, the Rev'ds John Yost, STS and Henry Pawluk, STS served as Confessors and the Rev'd Steve Saxe, STS, Dean, served as Chaplain. The Chapter will hold its next Easter Retreat on April 24-25 for the study of Lutheran Baptismal Rites with the Rev'd Dr. C. Pierson Shaw, STS serving as teaching theologian. The Rev'ds Andrew Wiesner, STS and Steve Saxe, STS, Dean, will serve as Chaplains.

The **Central Plains Chapter** met in retreat at the St. Benedict Retreat Center in Schuyler Nebraska February 27-28. The Rev'd Eric Alm, STS, served as chaplain, with the Rev'd David Klappenbach, STS presenting on a history of Catechesis as it would apply to today. At our June 12-13 retreat, we are planning a discussion of "Credo For Today" by Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger, in accordance with the Senior's request for the upcoming General Chapter Retreat.

The **Columbia River Chapter** will meet in retreat with our friends at Trinity Lutheran Church in Mt. Angel, Oregon on Thursday, May 11 for a one-day retreat with teaching theologians The Rev'd Ben Nicodemus, PhD candidate at Concordia Seminary in St. Louis. Title for his presentation is "Lutheran Theology that Shows a lot of Promise: How the Theology of Promise in Galatians Speaks in New Ways to the 21st Century."

The **Florida Chapter** met in retreat in March, with the Right Reverend Matthew L. Riegel, Bishop, West Virginia-western Maryland Synod, ELCA, presenting. The retreat was attended by 37 Bishops, Lutheran and Episcopal priests and deacons, and laity, from Florida, New York, West Virginia, North Carolina, Illinois, Pennsylvania, Georgia, Texas, and Maryland. We gather again June 19 - 20, 2023 with

the Rev'd Dr. John Eric Hurtgen, Dean, School of Theology; Campbellsville University presenting "Ephesians for Another Secular Age: Power, Presence, Prayer and the One People of God." For more information, contact the Rev'd Lawrence Recla, STS, Dean, at larryrecla@comcast.net

The **Great Rivers Chapter** spring retreat will be Monday through Wednesday, May 8-10th at St. Meinrad Archabbey in St. Meinrad, IN. In actuality this is a Tri-chapter retreat since we will be meeting with the **Northern Illinois** and **Indiana** Chapters. The Rev'd Senior Paddy Rooney, STS will be present for this retreat and will preside at Eucharist on both Monday and Wednesday. Our presenter is Fr. Rodney Eberhardt, STS who will be presenting on the following topic: "Toward a Lutheran Eucharistic Reservation for Communion." The Context follows the history of Reservation throughout the church's existence, and includes proposals for today, along with reflection on the topic.

The **Guadalupe River Chapter** will hold its Spring retreat at the Cedarbrake Renewal Center near Belton, Texas, May 2-4. The retreat Topic is "Church Buildings as Mission to the World." Teaching Theologians are: Rev'd Evan McClanahan, STS, and Rev'd Jared Stillions, STS, with a presentation titled "Building a Side-Hustle". This matters because church buildings are often unoccupied 160+ hours per week. This abundance of unoccupied space can serve your neighborhood's present needs.

The **Indiana Chapter** made its annual retreat to St. Augustine's House in Oxford, MI, February 6-8, 2023. Eight people attended the retreat, six members of the society with one spouse and one visitor. We studied together four video presentations offered by The Center for Apologetics and Worldviews out of Bethany Lutheran College in Mankato, MN, a Lutheran liberal arts college of the Evangelical Lutheran Synod: "Curved into Ourselves: How the New Gnosticism Cancels Our Own Humanity"; "The Creation Foundation vs. Critical Theory 'Identities': Viewing Human Nature from the Proper Perspective"; "Answering the Transhumanist Challenge: Finding Our Dignity and Purpose in the Incarnate Christ"; "The Trojan Horse of 'Online Worship': How Embodied Souls Receive Sacramental Bless-

ings from the Incarnate God". The presentations were part of a 2022 conference entitled "Biblical Identities in an age of Wokism and Transhumanism." For those who have never been to the only Lutheran monastery in the United States, we invite you to retreat with the Indiana Chapter and members of the Congregation of the Servants of Christ. The Indiana Chapter makes it pilgrimage to the monastery in the first two weeks of February, depending on the date of Ash Wednesday and the leadership council retreat of the society. In 2024, we'll be retreating Monday-Wednesday, January 29-31. Contact The Rev'd Norman Dew, STS, dean, for more information: normandew@gmail.com.

The joint Spring Retreat with the **Indiana Chapter**, the **Great Rivers Chapter**, and the **Northern Illinois Chapter**, will be Monday through Wednesday, May 8-10th at St. Meinrad Archabbey in St. Meinrad, IN. Our senior, the Rev'd Paddy Rooney, STS will be present for this retreat, presiding at Eucharist on both Monday and Wednesday. Our presenter is Fr. Rodney Eberhardt, STS who will be presenting on the following topic: "Toward a Lutheran Eucharistic Reservation for Communion."

The **Metropolitan New York Chapter** met in November, 2022 for an excellent presentation by the Rev'd Dr. John Hannah, STS, on the Army Chaplaincy of Piepkorn. While the chapter has diminished in size due to pastoral retirements and members moving to other states, we were blessed to have five inquirers attend with us with at least two desiring to sign the Rule. One challenge that our chapter has faced is that the majority of the retreat centers in Metro NY have closed permanently. We have recently identified a new location that can accommodate us and are planning our next 24 hour retreat in May. For more information contact the dean, the Rev'd Dr. John G. Fleischmann, STS

The **Minnesota Chapter** met recently for its Lenten retreat, and now looks forward to the summer retreat to be held July 10-11 at

Christ the King Retreat House in Buffalo, MN. Registration details will be announced later this spring. For further information, please email the Rev'd Erma Wolf, STS, dean, at pr.erma39@gmail.com or easwolf@me.com.

The **New England Chapter** will hold its overnight Lenten retreat March 22-23 at St. Joseph Retreat House in Milton, Mass., on "Contemplation of the Passion". For more information, contact the Rev'd Ryan Mills, STS, Dean.

The **Northern Illinois Chapter** will join in a Tri-Chapter Retreat May 8-10 at St. Meinrad, IN with the Indiana & Great Rivers Chapter. Fr. Rodney Eberhardt, STS, Teaching Theologian. Plans are underway for a summertime day retreat and the annual chapter picnic with outdoor concert at Millennium Park, Chicago. Contact the Rev'd Keith Forni, STS, Dean, for details. keithforni@gmail.com, 815 600 3030.

The **Susquehanna Chapter** met for a Lenten day retreat at St. Paul's in Millersburg, PA. The Rev'd AJ Domines, STS, Dean, taught on fasting and the Rev'd Mark Hoffman, STS served as chaplain. The Rev'd Tyler Graham, STS served as preacher. An Easter Retreat will be held May 1-2 at the Bethany Retreat Center in Frenchville, PA, with the Rev'd Robert Hawk, STS as the teaching theologian.

The **Wisconsin Chapter** gathered for retreat February 6-7 at St. Anthony Spirituality Center in Marathon, Wisconsin. The Rev'd Tim Duesenberg, STS, presented a review and refresher on the Doctrine of the Person of Christ. The Wisconsin Chapter will gather for retreat April 25-26 at St. Anthony's with fellow traveler the Rev'd Dr. Charles Cortwright presenting a lecture on the beginnings of monasticism with focus on SS. Anthony and Pachomius. Please direct inquiries to Wisconsin Chapter Dean the Rev'd Andrew Zoerb STS at pastorandy@oursaviorsdenmark.org.

A Reminder

If you are a Society member, your dues of \$330 are to be remitted by Holy Trinity Sunday, June 4th. Whether you go to the General Chapter Retreat or not, dues are still \$330. Dues forms will be sent during Bright Week. Remember to turn in your forms with your check. Online payment via Paypal will again be an option.

General Chapter retreat is September 19-21, 2023. There are no accommodations at the Joseph and Mary Center this year. Only medical exceptions for single rooms will be granted. Those rooms will be on the main campus. There is no other designated housing off campus. You will have to find that on your own, if desired.

In Memoriam

Comforted with the promise of the resurrection, we are nevertheless saddened to report the deaths of a number of our members over the past few months. A brief obituary follows for each of our 7 brothers who have fallen asleep in the Lord.

The **Rev'd Dr. Jacob Larry Yoder, STS** (1943-2022) was a member of the Carolinas chapter, a founding member of our Society and a prime mover in drafting our Rule. Larry was both a parish pastor and a professor at Lenoir-Rhyne College where for many years he was the driving force behind the famous Luther and Aquinas lecture series. But above all Larry was the model of faithful service to Christ and His Church.

The **Rev'd James Henry Fladland, STS** (1953-2022) was a member of the Susquehanna chapter and served congregations in Virginia, Minnesota, Iowa and Pennsylvania and was still serving congregation at the point of his untimely death. He completed his graduate studies in OT at Union Theological Seminary and taught at colleges and seminaries in WA, VA and PA.

The **Rev'd James F. Peters, STS** (1939-2022) was a member of the Wisconsin chapter. He served parishes in Michigan and Wisconsin and also as a missionary for a number of years in Tanzania. He was an active member of a number of groups serving the communities in which he lived. Known for his dry wit and great sense of humor, Jim was a regular attendee at our General Chapter gatherings until his health no longer permitted such trips.

The **Rev'd John Philip Kline, STS** (1931-2022) was a member of the Susquehanna Chapter. Phil served a number of congregations in Pennsylvania after having been ordained in 1960. Following retirement, Phil remained active in his community in the foster care program and also in various facets of the corrections system.

The **Rev'd Theodore (Ted) Hanus STS** (1938-2023) was a member of the Florida chapter. Ted served as a parish pastor for more than 42 years in New York and Florida. In 1967 he volunteered as a part time Army chaplain for the Na-

tional Guard and served units over the next 23 years in PA, NY and FL. He retired with the rank of LTC.

The **Rev'd Dr. James Bennett, STS** (1935-2023) was a member of the Carolinas chapter. During his 60 years of ministry, he served parishes in PA, KY and TX, went on to serve as Assistant to the Bishop in KY and then served as Bishop of the Southwestern Texas Synod (ELCA) for 6 years until his retirement when he moved to Aiken, SC.

The **Rev'd James Franklin Harbaugh, STS** (1954-2023) was a member of the Iowa chapter. Jim was a gifted musician who served a number of congregations before being ordained to the ministry of Word and Sacrament in 1980. He retired to Minnesota and was also active in that chapter while live streaming morning and evening prayer for those who wished to share in the divine office.

And while not members of our Society, it is our privilege to note the passing of two longtime friends and supporters of the Society – **Connie Seddon** and **The Reverend Dr. James Nestingen**.

For many of the early years of our Society, **Connie** served as the editor of our newsletter *De Trinitate*. Her faithfulness and constancy in editing and distributing the newsletter was remarkable and we remain grateful to her for all that effort on our behalf.

Dr. Nestingen was a powerful influence upon many of our members through his writings and teachings down through the years. An early participant in the Call to Faithfulness movement and so many other efforts to ensure orthodoxy, Jim's presence among us, with his infectious wit, will be sadly missed.

May all these servants of Christ now rest in the eternal peace of Christ until the great day of resurrection. Amen

From The Vicar

The Society of the Holy Trinity is a unique organization within the Church catholic and our Lutheran bodies that are part of that Church. It is a true ministerium of similarly minded pastors working together to remain faithful to their ordination vows. It primarily does so through prayer, study, and mutual accountability. With approximately 170 active members in the Society, involving many different judicatories, both large and small, it offers a truly unique perspective and hope “for the renewal of the office to which we have been called.” (A Founding Statement)

Another aspect of its singularity is the practice since the earliest days of our founding to seek consensus on matters of central practice. Tired of perpetual parliamentary procedures and maneuvering with the requisite counting of votes which creates winners and losers, the founders sought to find a different way of making decisions. Through a process of proposals, discussions, both formal and informal, postponements, and reconsideration, we continue to seek a path forward. Some discussions are vigorous and passionate, others are cerebral and measured. But the goal is always to find common ground. Because of this, the Society is not enamored with position statements or proscribed practices. It has made a few pastoral statements, but seeking consensus has helped to keep these from becoming divisive.

However, consensus has some pitfalls. It is crucial to remember that consensus does not mean unanimity. Consensus means that an individual may not agree with the proposition in its entirety, but is able to accept the results as the will of the Spirit and the community. In building consensus, a person may understand that the will of the Society is in one direction, even if it is not one’s own preference. We have learned that this is particularly true in the area of elections. The Rule calls for the Senior of the Society and the Deans of the Chapters to be elected by pure ecclesiastical ballot which means that they must receive 100% of the votes cast. This requirement means that it is possible it is possible for an individual or a small group to stalemate an election. But consensus says that when the will of the group, under the direction of the Holy Spirit is clearly in one direction, then the individual will yield to the group and accept the decision.

The same pitfall can be found when we seek to chart a course of action within the Society. Enthusiastic discussion is helpful in making a decision. Different perspectives are helpful in discovering different ways of accomplishing a task. Consensus hopes to find a common ground. But it is possible for an individual to block the direction of the whole. As we learned in elections, we can also learn in setting directions for the good of the Society. This is one example. At the 2022 General Chapter Retreat, The Rev’d Dr. Dick Johnson STS, noted the graying of the Society. At the same time, it is easy for anyone to believe that their training and experience is normative to all other pastors. However, the training of those of us with gray hair has proved to be profoundly different from those who have no natural gray. Distance learning, online seminaries, and recent converts to Christianity being drawn to ordination have changed the landscape of the Church. The direction of the Society of the Holy Trinity needs to take that into account as we seek for a different way to attract, nurture and sustain its potential members into God’s future. Consensus, not unanimity, can help us set such a needed course.

The Society of the Holy Trinity stands as a beacon of hope in an increasingly confused world and the Church. Our broad based ministerium and our practice of seeking consensus in making decisions sets a different course for the Church. May the Holy Spirit continue to guide us for the sake of the faithful.

~ In Christ,

The Rev’d Jim Lehmann, STS
Vicar

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News and Reflection from the Society of the Holy Trinity

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