

DE TRINITATE

Newsletter of the Society of the Holy Trinity
Societas Trinitatis Sanctae

From The Senior

The Greying of the Society

“O God from my youth you have taught me and I still proclaim your wonderous deeds. So even to old age and grey hairs O God do not forsake me until I proclaim your might to all the generations to come.” Psalm 71:17-18

In recent months I have heard more and more often from our Deans and others about how some of our members can no longer make it to chapter retreats, particularly if they are held at a great distance or to our General Chapter, either because of their age or their physical infirmities. And this point has been driven home to me by the deaths of so many of our members in recent months (totaling 10 so far since our last General Chapter). This understanding was brought home to us by the Rev'd Dr. Richard Johnson STS who named the issue in his address last year at our anniversary dinner when he spoke of “the greying of the Society” and its implications for our future.

Now it is true that we are not all old. Indeed, in recent years we have been blessed to receive a number of members into our ranks who are quite young – and no jokes about everybody seems young when you have reached the age of 75! But the reality is that a majority of our members are in that category of aging or greying. Many who helped found the Society now more than 25 years ago, or who joined shortly thereafter having gone through “the great tribulation” in their judicatories, were already middle aged when they started, which means that they are now in their 70's or 80's or even older. Traveling a distance to attend Chapter or General Chapter retreats becomes more difficult. A lack of communication with others in the chapter leaves some feeling isolated or alone. A retirement move means that you may no longer live near one of chapters at all – putting you in that nebulous “at large” category. The tough reality is that we are, by and large, an aging or greying body which means, in turn, determining how we look to the

future, with all that such action implies and at the same time, care for and assist those members who are no longer able to actively participate in the life of our Society according to the Rule.

First let me say clearly that age itself does not mean that any one member can no longer be active or involved, as many of our members still are, even as their years progress. But when one of our members has reached the point where they are no longer able to participate as they did previously, we need to find ways in which they can continue to be part of our body. The Psalmist sums this up well when he says, “*Do not cast me off in the time of my old age; do not forsake me when my strength is spent*” Psalm 71:9. While many of us have more than enough pastoral responsibilities in our own ministries, I would urge each Dean and each chapter member to reach out to those who can no longer attend retreats or activities, so that they feel connected and involved. I know that many of you have done this already and for that I am grateful. But the challenge will come as more of our membership ages and the burden becomes a little heavier.

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Deans also need to look at the structure and location for retreats. While our Rule calls for three 24-hour retreats plus the General Chapter retreat and such remains our norm, we may also need to look at the occasional one-day retreat as some chapters are already doing, to accommodate those members who cannot stay overnight. And location becomes an important issue. I know the difficulty of finding retreat centers these days, especially those at a reasonable cost, but we also need to ensure that such facilities can handle our aging membership. Even at General Chapter we know that the walk between buildings can be difficult for some, and we

should seek to provide accommodation to the physical needs of our members.

We might also be thinking about providing for some of our members to join our teaching or learning times during chapter retreats through remote means. I am not a lover of “hybrid worship” with some members in the church and others on-line. But many recognize that, following the pandemic, the reality of such forms will likely continue, and we might do well to try and accommodate such shared learning time with members who are physically unable to attend a retreat.

There is also the reality that our Society has changed a great deal over the past 25 years of its existence. Yet our leadership has remained in the ranks of those who have been around since the beginning. While some of our deans are now much younger and newer to the Society, our Leadership Council as a whole still reflects that greying that is endemic in our body. At some point we may be called to look toward a generational change in leadership which might in turn mean a generational change in thinking about our Society and its mode of living within the one, holy Church of Jesus Christ.

Finally, there is the issue of recruiting younger members to be part of our Society. It is not just that we might present an image of being older or grey-headed, although

admittedly that can be off putting in its own way, but rather that we present an image of being stuck in the past and unwilling to consider the future. When we began it was easy to know what we were against. Now, if we want to attract those younger members, we are called to envision what we are for, what is positive and powerful about our Society, to articulate the “what” and “why” of our existence and why younger pastors would be open to joining us. To do this we need to enter a time of prayerful reflection as a body, to discern where the Spirit is calling us and then to be willing to bend toward that Spirit’s breath as it moves among us.

I do not despair that our Society is aging or becoming more grey-headed. There is value in the wisdom of those among us who are more mature. And change is inevitable so we must learn to embrace it. But most importantly, it is now our time to prayerfully reflect on the reality of this “greying” situation among us and to discern what it may mean for our future as a body because whether we are ready or not, the greying will continue. Or, as Alfred Lord Tennyson put it so succinctly, *“The old order changeth yielding place to new, lest one good custom should corrupt the world.”*

In Christ

~ The Rev’d Senior Paddy Rooney, STS

Chapter Updates

Central Plains Chapter

The Central Plains chapter met in retreat June 12-13 at the Christ the King Priory/St. Benedict Retreat Center in Schuyler Nebraska. There was no teaching theologian as we engaged in discussion of Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger’s book “Credo for Today.” In Worship, we observed the commemoration of Saint Anthony of Padua for June 13. In our reading of the Rule at chapter retreats, we had previously concluded reading it through and began again at the beginning. Our next chapter retreat will be December 4-5 in Schuyler.

The Rev’d Jeff Cottingham, STS, Dean

Chesapeake-Potomac Chapter

The Chesapeake-Potomac Chapter met for its Spring Retreat on May 1-2 at the Claggett Conference Center in Adamstown, Maryland. Our teaching theologian was our former Dean, The Rev’d Dr. Carl Roemer, STS, who continued on the theme of the Miracles of Jesus – which he had begun at the Advent Retreat in December of 2022. The Daily Offices were chanted, and Mass was celebrated on Tuesday, May 2, commemorating St Athanasius, Bishop of Alexandria, as well as utilizing the Athanasian Creed. During the morning plenary the Dean spent time with the Chapter reviewing the extended document on the duties of the Dean,

approved by the Leadership Council in February of this year. The next retreat will take place after the General Chapter Retreat in early Advent of 2023.

The Rev’d Rod L Ronneberg, STS, Dean

Columbia River Chapter

The Columbia River Chapter held one-day retreat at Trinity Lutheran Church in Mt. Angel, Oregon. The teaching theologian was the Rev’d Dr. Ben Nickodemus who offered two presentations on his dissertation from Concordia Seminary St. Louis: “Lutheran Theology that shows a lot of Promise: How the Theology of Promise in Galatians Speaks in New Ways to the 21st Century.” During the extended lunch break, they toured the rare books vault at the nearby St. Benedict Abbey which included many pre-reformation and medieval breviaries as well as a German translation of the Vulgate dated to 1483. The group shared Morning Prayer and Evening Prayer from the Lutheran Service Book led by the Rev’d’s Arthur Olsen, STS, Joel Nickel, STS, and and Joe Hughes, STS. The congregation generously hosted the event providing breakfast and lunch at the church, and then hosted dinner at a local restaurant at the close of the retreat.

The Rev’d Joseph Hughes, STS, Dean

Iowa-Nebraska Chapter

The Iowa-Nebraska Chapter gathered for a 48-hour retreat with twelve members and one guest at the Stone Center, Camp EW-ALU, Strawberry Point, Iowa. The Rev'd Christopher Staley STS served as Chaplain for the Retreat. The Rev'ds Wade Reddy, STS and Luther Thoresen, STS were called upon to proclaim the Word during Retreat. The Rev'd Jay Denne STS served as confessor for the Retreat. Our theologian was the Rev'd Mark Mattes of Grandview University, Des Moines, IA. He spoke on Christology and the work N. F. S. Grundtvig.

The Rev'd Gary Hatcher, STS, Dean

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 three brothers who have fallen asleep in the Lord.

The Rev'd Dr. Steven Ray Little STS (1952-2023) was a member of the former Sangre de Cristo chapter. Steven was fluent in Latin, Hebrew, Greek, and German, which enriched his ministry. He served as a Deacon in LCMS as a youth worker before seeking ordination in the ELCA in 1994. He served parishes in Missouri, Kansas, and Oklahoma.

The Rev'd Dr. Frederick John Schumacher STS (1939-2023) was a founding member of the Society and a long time member of the Metro New York Chapter. Fred was

From The Secretary

Dear friends, Please remember to send your annual dues, in the amount of \$330.00. The dues were due on Holy Trinity Sunday (June 4), but at this writing, I have received only about one quarter of what is to be remitted.

The General Chapter Retreat will take place September 19-21 at the University of St. Mary of the Lake Conference Center in Mundelein, IL. The theme of this year's General Chapter is "[Doxology and Doctrine: How the Creeds Form Us Liturgically and Catechetically.](#)" More information will be sent in mid-June via the Deans, and will also be on the website. Note that all retreat attendees should read Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger's book "[Credo For Today](#)" before the retreat, which can be found in e-book form (paper copies are rare and expensive). An important change for this year: we do not have access to Joseph and Mary House in 2023 due to a late-scheduled archdiocesan event. We have no control over this as that retreat house is owned by

Wisconsin Chapter

Wisconsin Chapter members, spouses, and fellow travelers met for retreat on April 25-6 at St. Anthony's Spirituality Center in Marathon, WI. The Rev'd Dr. Charles Cortwright offered a survey of church history with particular attention paid to SS. Anthony and Pachomius. This was part of a course designed by him and available for wider usage. One of our blessed fellow travelers, Bess Alberg, had passed away in February. The Wisconsin Chapter has made a special offering to the General Chapter in memory of Bess. Our next gathering is scheduled for November 6/7 at St. Norbert's Abbey in DePere, WI.

The Rev'd Andrew Zoerb, STS, Dean

ordained in 1964 and served St. Matthews, White Plains, NY, until his retirement. He also served for twenty years as Executive Director at American Lutheran Publicity Bureau, during which he compiled and edited "For All the Saints" that invaluable resource used by so many of us in our Daily Prayer offices.

The Rev'd Ronald Allen Rasmus STS (1944-2023) was a member of the Great Rivers Chapter. Ron was ordained in 2004 and served several calls in Illinois and Indiana, many of those as mission starts, in addition to providing long-term interims for congregations in transition. Following retirement, Ron served as chaplain to multiple law enforcement agencies.

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

the diocese now. All of us will fit in the Main Lodge, but it will be cozy. Please note that not all requests for single rooms will be able to be accommodated—preference will go toward those with a medical necessity for a single room. While not ideal, retreatants are able to book their own housing at local hotels, if preferred.

Deans will contact their chapter members and friends with directions on how to register for the retreat. Those who are not members nor affiliated with any chapter will be able to register with me after July 1. The deadline for registration this year is August 25. Now is a good time for members to be certain their chapter dean has their updated email and other contact information so as not to miss out on important details!

The Rev'd Pari R. Bailey, STS, Secretary

From The Vicar

They said that the sea was relatively calm, and it probably was. For a mid-westerner who has only spent time on Wisconsin lakes in a 14 foot aluminum boat with a 15 hp outboard motor, the swells seemed big enough to me. “Good thing you weren't here yesterday,” the waitress told us. “The people came back soaked and cold.” So we rode the 12 kilometers out to Skellig Michael and circumnavigated the island. We did not get on the island because only 180 people are permitted per day. For the monks of St. Fiona Monastery, who lived in small, stone, beehive shaped huts from the 6th to the 13th century, such massive crowds were the very thing they sought to escape. They wanted no distractions to their life of prayer and meditation.

Admittedly, it takes a certain personality to be able to live that austere life. For members of the Society of the Holy Trinity, we do not seek to escape the world, no matter how appealing that may be for some. However, we have a similar desire to focus on prayer, study of scripture, and meditation. The monks knew why they were there. We in the STS must always be reminded of why we exist. We seek to hone personal piety and pastoral skills for the sake of the Church.

When we sign the Rule, we say, “Before God and my fellow pastors gathered here, and for the sake of the vows I spoke when I was ordained to the Holy Ministry, I hereby subscribe to the Rule of the Society of the Holy Trinity, asking the help of God and seeking the support of this Society.” So we retreat together. We regularly read from the Rule. We pray together. We study together and learn from each other. It helps us to improve our personal devotional life. We recognize that we need each other as we work toward the confessional and spiritual renewal of the Lutheran churches. (Preamble to the Rule) We do so for the sake of the Church and the congregations we serve.

The Society of the Holy Trinity is not a perfect ministerium. It is filled with sinners, of which I am foremost. When the Society was formed, and when many of us joined, it was in response to concerns about the direction of the Church catholic and the Lutheran branch in particular. To some degree this is a safe haven. We agree on so many things But we have not, nor will we ever, agree on all matters. Left unchecked, disagreements can begin to cause cracks or even fissures between us. We have worked to keep divisive issues out of the conversations in Chapter or General gatherings. We must always be vigilant. Writing to the Corinthians (I Corinthians 10: 23-23), Saint Paul says, “*All things are lawful, but not all things are helpful. All things are lawful, but not all things build up. Let no one seek his own good, but the good of his neighbor.*”

By staying focused on the main things, by developing personal discipline of prayer, study, and meditation, pastors can be transformed. It is for the sake of the Church and for the sake of the world.. When we find ourselves living or teaching in ways that may be troublesome to the neighbor, we would do well to remember St. Paul's admonition. We do not seek our own good, but the good of the neighbor. I am not suggesting that we seek the lowest common denominator or that the most easily offended control all others. But we have to realize that our words effect many people.

“Let us hold fast to the confession of our hope without wavering, for he who promised is faithful. And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works.” (Hebrews 10:23-24)

The Rev'd Jim Lehmann, STS
Vicar

A Reminder

De Trinitate prints notice of members who have recently entered the Church Triumphant. If you are aware of a Society member's death, please contact our Secretary, The Rev'd Pari Bailey, STS, at revsbailey@redred.com with name, date of death, and chapter affiliation.

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