

DE TRINITATE

Newsletter of the Society of the Holy Trinity

Societas Trinitatis Sanctae

Volume 9, Number 3, After Pentecost 2006

From the Senior

In the previous issue of *De Trinitate* I mentioned the steady trickle of members of our Society into other communions, especially the Roman Catholic Church. I noted that evangelical catholics have difficulty with the reductionistic tendencies of Lutheran theology and church practice and may therefore be lured into communions where catholicity is more securely anchored and expressed. I didn't mention names, but I don't think these former members should be wiped out of our corporate memory. We have valued them as friends and colleagues and I hope that they can continue to be in contact with us. Over the two last years those departing to be received into other communions include Paul Abbe, Richard and Ruth Ballard, Earl Mahan, Patrick McLean, Thomas McMichael, Richard Miesel, Paul Quist, and William Walton.

Just after the previous issue of *De Trinitate* was mailed, I learned in a personal letter of the decision of the first Senior of our Society, Phillip Max Johnson, to be received into the Roman Catholic Church, along with his wife Janet. After the previous losses, this one is especially troubling, especially since Phillip had so often encouraged us to stay in place and exercise the pastoral ministry faithfully in the congregations to which we are called. A member of the Rocky Mountain Chapter expressed what I think many of us felt when we heard this news: "I find myself having an incredibly difficult time with all of this. I alternate between feelings of sadness, anger, grief, and envy."

In the wake of these transitions out of the ordained ministry of Lutheran churches, we need to be reminded that the Society of the Holy Trinity does not exist to provide a holding pattern for those who are waiting to fly elsewhere. According to our Rule we are "committed to work toward the confessional and spiritual renewal of Lutheran churches." This is where the life and energy of our Society needs to be focused. We exist as a ministerium to support Lutheran pastors in the faithful exercise of pastoral ministry in Lutheran churches.

Not all prominent Lutheran converts to Roman Catholicism or Eastern Orthodoxy have been members of our Society. We learned about the evangelical catholic character of the Lutheran Reformation from eminent teachers like Robert Wilken and Jaroslav Pelikan, now of blessed memory. Richard John Neuhaus and Leonard Klein wrote for years in *Lutheran Forum* and *Forum Letter* about the need to heal the breach of the sixteenth century. Neuhaus and Klein especially developed a view of Lutheranism as a reform move-

ment in the Catholic Church of the West. That was exciting, but I think finally misleading. The Lutheran Confession was used to renew and organize evangelical churches. But those churches remained churches with all the catholic marks of the church. Lutheran pastors have served churches; they have not just been partisans of a reform movement.

One possible reaction to these "defections" is to pull back from a commitment to unity, often looking for deficiencies in the Roman or other communions to justify why we are not making this journey, or arguing that agreements like the Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification haven't resolved everything. So I want to affirm, against any such reactionary feelings, that the Society of the Holy Trinity is still "dedicated to the Lutheran vocation of reform of the Church and the Lutheran ecumenical destiny of reconciliation with the bishop and church of Rome" (*Rule*, Ch. VIII.4). The logic of our Rule assumes that the renewal of the Lutheran churches serves reconciliation with the Roman communion. Short cuts to Rome may be tempting and personally satisfying, but it is pastorally irresponsible to abandon congregations and colleagues, and it is ecumenically irresponsible to give up the painstaking work of moving whole communions toward fellowship with each other.

Maybe some of us are envious of those who have made decisions to leave. It's not always pleasant to remain in place and contend for the truth of the gospel or to champion the great tradition in our congregations and denominations. But it is not a matter of leaving leaking lifeboats to climb back on the bark of Peter, as Fr. Jay Scott Newman argued at our general retreat two years ago. There is not only one ship on the sea of the Christian faith, but a flotilla. Storms have tossed us about and we have become separated, to the danger of us all. Our objective is to bring the fleet back together so that we may support one another and so that each ship may contribute the gifts it has been given in service to the mission of God in the world.

Finally, we are a ministerium. Mutual conversation and consolation must occur in our chapter retreats. *It should not come as a surprise that one of our members is leaving the Lutheran ministry.* These are vocational matters we should be sharing with our colleagues. I look forward to more sharing at the general retreat. I pray that this general retreat will be a genuine renewal of our ministries of Word and Sacrament in Lutheran churches.

In caritate Christi,
Frank C. Senn, STS, Senior

Plan to Attend the General Retreat

All members and those who intend to subscribe to the Rule of the Society of the Holy Trinity are urged to attend the general retreat of the Society at St. Mary of the Lake University Conference Center in Mundelein, Ill. The dates of the retreat are Tuesday, September 26, beginning with lunch at 1:00 p.m., through Thursday, September 28, ending with lunch at 1:00 p.m. Members register their attendance through their chapter dean. Members-at-large or visitors register through the Secretary of the Society, John Priest, STS. *Anyone arriving on Monday night, September 25, must make direct contact with the Conference Center to secure a room. Be warned that this is a busy place!* The number to call at the Center for those who wish to arrive early is 847-566-8290.

We have a full agenda at this general retreat. The election of a Senior will take place, using the ecclesiastical ballot. The Bursar will also be elected, by majority vote. The Senior has asked the dean of the Wisconsin Chapter, Mark Knappe, STS, to conduct the elections. Our teaching theologian will be Larry Vogel, STS, who will address us on the topic of "Law and Gospel in Pastoral Practice." On Tuesday night we will break into small groups to study Romans 7. Please bring your Bibles. On Wednesday night we will break into small groups to discuss *The Hammer of God*, by Bo Giertz. Please bring a copy of the book. Introductions to the topics on both nights will be given by James Nestingen, STS.

Our chaplain this year is Richard O. Johnson, STS, dean of the California Chapter. Our preachers will be Karl Johnsen, STS (Rocky Mountain Chapter), Ronald Bagnall, STS (New England Chapter), and Pari Bailey, STS (Minnesota Chapter). We will pray the daily prayer of the church, have opportunity for both individual and corporate confession, and celebrate Holy Communion on Thursday morning. Renewal of ordination vows and installation of new deans will take place at the opening service on Tuesday afternoon. There will be opportunity to subscribe to the Rule at the opening service and at the end of Matins on Thursday. Our Senior, Frank Senn, STS, is planning to deliver an edifying address in the opening service on the ecclesiastical reality of Lutheranism.

Friends of the Society are welcome to attend. Please contact the Secretary of the Society, John Priest, for more information. Contact numbers appear on the back of this newsletter. We look forward to seeing you there.

Armed Forces Prayer Book Available

A new Protestant edition of the *Armed Forces Prayer Book* is available, thanks to author and editor David G. Poedel, STS, a member of the Sangre de Cristo Chapter of the Society of the Holy Trinity. The book features prayers on subjects such as safety, strength, freedom from temptation, and remembrance of loved ones, along with the Lord's Prayer, hymns, and selected Bible passages. Also included are the stations of the cross and an order for celebration of the Holy Eucharist, things not usually found in a Protestant prayer book.

The book is published and distributed through Autom Company and listed in their Living Grace Catalog (see <http://www.livinggracecatalog.com/>; search under "armed

forces" or "JC501"). The 96-page books are available in packages of 12 for \$3.95 each.

Chapter News

CAROLINAS CHAPTER

Dean, J. Larry Yoder, yoder@lrc.edu

The Carolinas Chapter met for its Pentecost retreat on June 12–13 at the Catholic Conference Center near Hickory, N.C. Five STS Carolinas Chapter members, two seminarians, and six other laypersons attended. The participants prayed the hours.

Acting Dean Larry Yoder, STS, presented the second part of a two-part series begun at the Advent 2005 retreat, concerning the impact of philosophy upon theology. Loyd Ginn, STS, had presented the first part, beginning with the pre-Socratics and tracing the development and emphases of philosophy up through St. Thomas. Pr. Yoder began with the Enlightenment and followed the influence of philosophical developments on theology through to the present day, in broad strokes.

Carl Voges, STS, Vicar of the Society, conducted the ecclesiastical ballot for chapter dean to replace Paul Abbe, who had resigned in the interim following the Lenten retreat. Pr. Yoder received the necessary unanimous vote on the fourth ballot.

The Carolinas Chapter will meet in an Advent retreat on December 4–5, presently scheduled to take place at the Catholic Conference Center.

DELAWARE CHAPTER

Dean, Michael Edwards-Ronning, grailpriest@verizon.net

The Delaware River Chapter gathers regularly for retreats in the birthplace of our Society, Loyola House, located in Morristown, N.J. Recent and upcoming retreat topics include: "The Third Use of the Law," led by Larry Vogel, STS; "The Use of the Scriptures in the Lutheran Confessions," led by Michael Tavella, STS; "Iconography," led by Fred Schumacher, STS; and (upcoming on November 13–14) "The Catholicity of the Reformation," led by Francis Bonadonna, STS.

Upon the retirement of our beloved dean, Ronald Yergey, STS, an election for chapter dean was held, with John Hannah, STS presiding. Michael Edwards-Ronning, STS, was elected as new chapter dean.

IOWA CHAPTER-IN-FORMATION

Contact, David A. Aanonsen, pastor@ctklutheranic.org

The second retreat of the Iowa Chapter-in-Formation was held at American Martyrs Retreat Center, Cedar Falls, Iowa, on May 8–9. Jerome Cloninger, STS, led us through the daily offices and presided and preached at Holy Communion. Pr. Gary Hatcher led a discussion of the book *Beginning to Pray* by Orthodox Archbishop Anthony Bloom. David Aanonsen, STS, served as confessor. The retreat was attended by eight pastors.

Our next chapter retreat is November 13–14 at the same retreat center.

General Retreat: Suggested Reading

***The Hammer of God,* by Bo Giertz**

Augsburg Fortress Press, Minneapolis, Minnesota
2005 rev. ed. includes previously untranslated concluding chapter

***The Proper Distinction Between Law and Gospel,* by C. F. W. Walther**

Concordia Publishing House, St. Louis, Missouri
1989 edition

Note: Electronic version of CPH 1929 edition (up to Thirteenth Evening Lecture) available at
www.lutherantheology.com/walther/LG/index.html

***Law and Gospel: Philip Melancthon's Debate with John Agricola of Eisleben over Poenitentia,* by Timothy Wengert**

Baker Academic Books, Grand Rapids, Michigan
1997 edition

METRO NEW YORK CHAPTER

Dean, Rodney L. Eberhardt, srpastorstlukes@verizon.net

The Metro New York Chapter held its spring retreat on May 15–16. This retreat is our annual business and planning retreat, with time for reflection and prayer. Rodney Eberhardt, STS, was again elected as dean of the Metro New York Chapter, and plans were made for the coming year of retreats and events. Discussion was given to developing more lay involvement and support of the Society and, with this in mind, a retreat for church council members of congregations whose pastors are members of the chapter was discussed. The chapter also gave consideration to sponsoring seminary candidates as novices in the Society.

The November 6–7 retreat will be led by John Fleishmann, STS, and Terrence Weber, STS, and will focus on the new worship books that will be available soon from both the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA), *Evangelical Lutheran Worship*, and the Lutheran Church–Missouri Synod (LCMS), *Lutheran Service Book*.

In February we will hold our annual study retreat and hope to feature Fr. Benedict Groeschel. Our February retreat dates will be moved in order to accommodate the winter break of at least one of our seminaries. Through a contact we hope to be able to invite two or three seminarians to our winter retreats annually.

NEW ENGLAND CHAPTER

Dean, Jack R. Whritenour, JRWNCAW@aol.com

On June 11–12, the New England Chapter gathered in retreat at St. Edmund's Retreat, Enders Island in Mystic, Conn. Four chapter members and five guests were in attendance. Our teaching theologian was the Rev. Dr. Karl P. Donfried, the Elizabeth A. Woodson Professor Emeritus of Religion and Biblical Literature at Smith College in

Northampton, Mass., where he taught from 1968–2005. Dr. Donfried gave a presentation on his new book *Who Owns the Bible?: Toward the Recovery of a Christian Hermeneutic*. He contends that a “gospel” of inclusiveness/acceptance has replaced the biblical gospel of redemption. Though not rejecting the historical-critical method in which he was trained, he argues the need for this method to be employed in the context of the Trinitarian faith of the Church catholic. This book is a “must read” for anyone interested in and affected by the current crisis in biblical interpretation in American Lutheranism. Preachers for the retreat were Henry Pawluk, STS, and Jack Whritenour, STS.

ROCKY MOUNTAIN CHAPTER

Dean, Brad Everett, beverett@telusplanet.net

Dietrich Bonhoeffer's classic book, *Life Together*, was the focus of our time together when the Rocky Mountain Chapter gathered in retreat May 28–30 at the FCJ Retreat Centre in Calgary, Alberta. Rolf Bjornstad, STS, led three discussion sessions on the book, which left us both encouraged and challenged in how we go about fulfilling our calls as pastors. Brad Everett, STS chapter dean, served as chaplain and Randall Meissner, STS, was confessor. The chapter also agreed upon a schedule for mutual visitation among its members for the year.

Our next retreat is November 26–28 at the Providence Renewal Centre in Edmonton, Alberta. James Nestingen, STS, will be our teaching theologian and Society visitor.

SOUTHERN OHIO CHAPTER

Dean, Brian Peterson, revx2@who.rr.com

The Southern Ohio Chapter held a chapter retreat at St. Therese's Retreat Center in Columbus, Ohio, June 26–27. Jerry Kliner, STS, led us in a discussion of the ELCA's Renewing Worship process and their new *Evangelical Lutheran Worship* resource, so that we might begin to discern the merits and demerits of this material for potential use in our congregations. In addition, Brian Peterson, STS dean, used the chapter meeting to prepare the members of the chapter for the fall general retreat of the Society. The theme of this retreat will be “Law and Gospel in Pastoral Practice.” Joy Schroeder, STS, led us in prayer during the retreat as we continued to worship our Lord, one of the greatest duties and pleasures of our life together.

SUSQUEHANNA CHAPTER

Dean, Beth A. Schlegel, baschlegel@christlutheranyork.com

Prayers of thanksgiving, healing, and comfort are requested for Paddy Rooney, STS, who is recovering well from neck surgery and for Tom Shelley, STS, whose father died Saturday, July 7, after a lengthy illness.

TEXAS CHAPTER-IN-FORMATION

Contact, Mark Hoffman, mahoffmansts@stjohnsroosterchurch.org

The Guadalupe River Chapter-in-Formation (Texas), met for retreats on February 13–14 and May 8–9. In the first of these two retreats, we conversed about pastoral issues raised by Bo Giertz's book, *The Hammer of God*. In the sec-

and retreat we explored the implications of Dietrich Bonhoeffer's *Life Together*. Six of the seven pastors in attendance were visitors; two of those have indicated their intention to attend the general retreat and subscribe to the Rule. All glory and honor be to God!

Our Autumn retreat, November 13–14 at the Moyer Retreat Center in Castroville, Tex., will focus on *Evangelical Lutheran Worship*, led by organist/choirmaster Thomas Pavlechko. All Lutheran clergy are welcome to attend.

WISCONSIN CHAPTER

Dean, Mark W. Knappe, gdlc@execpc.com

Anticipating the fall general retreat, the Wisconsin and Northern Illinois chapters gathered jointly in retreat on June 12–13 to discuss *The Hammer of God*. We were grateful to have our Senior with us, who led us in a spirited discussion. This is definitely a book worth reading more than once, for it has much to teach those who serve in the pastoral office. Joel Schmalz, STS, was the preacher at the Eucharist as we celebrated St. Barnabas, apostle.

We are considering the possibility of having our next retreat in November at Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne, Ind., together with other STS chapters in the area.

From the Vicar

This Society began to emerge more than ten years ago as a group of Lutheran pastors noticed how the Life of the Holy Trinity was being diminished and how eagerly their church structures were working to accommodate the world's life. Nine years ago this summer, a portion of that group gathered for an intense three days and produced *The Rule*, a faithful, classical expression of the Society's intent.

As we wrestle with the resignations of colleagues from the Society, we should note that what is going on in this tumult is a maturation of the Society's life and work. When colleagues leave, the rest of us have to consider why we stay. Granted, this is not the way we expected to mature, but then, we are not the drivers of our lives, the Lord God is! From this perspective, this maturation is the refining and purifying work of the Lord (Psalm 12), a work that will run in and out of the church's life until the End-of-Time.

This maturation is leading us back to the content of the gospel to which our ministerium is subscribed to proclaim and celebrate (the Lord's rescue of the world's people from sin, Satan, and death through the Son's crucifixion and resurrection).

This maturation also leads us to the practice of that gospel within our ministerium (being imbedded in the Lord's Scriptures and Sacraments while wading into the afflictions and sufferings of the church and the world).

Such maturation re-centers our life and work in a theology of the Cross (in opposition to the theology of glory that swarms our structures in this North American culture). It also reinforces our understanding of the baptized person as a bewildering combination of sinner-saint from Baptism to death (a distinctive teaching of the Lutherans within the one, holy, catholic, and apostolic Church).

As Society members we have the opportunities to gather together for prayer and study in significant retreats. There we plunge into the biblical, sacramental, historical, and confessional foundations of the Lutheran churches in which we are called to the pastoral office. In these settings we work to re-connect those foundations to our church structures as well as relate them to other church structures.

The Society has been an overwhelming gift to its members because it focuses on the saving and sustaining actions of the Holy Trinity. It strengthens and directs our ministries in the parishes we serve (a reality noticed by parishioners). It undergirds the lives of seminarians and parish leaders who participate in the retreats. It gives us fresh energy to carry out the work for which we were ordained.

Participating in this maturation is unsettling and difficult. But it reminds us that we are dealing with the powers unleashed by the unholy trio. Even though they were defeated by the Son's dying and rising, they will continue to lash out at all those who are baptized and ordained.

Participating in this maturation is hard work, but it is also highly satisfying. In the interactions with one another, we share in the joy of such ministry and bear each other's burdens. Our lives and our work have been set within the template of the Great Three Days (Good Friday, Holy Saturday, Easter Day), a vivid reminder that we are constantly traveling through the reality of those Days.

Carl A. Voges, STS, Vicar

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