From the Senior

By now all of the members of the Society should have seen copies of the two statements issued by the Leadership Council: Concerning Same-Sex Unions and Concerning the Language of Worship. These have been disseminated to chapters by the deans. Members-at-large who may have been missed in the distribution may contact me directly for a copy.

These statements are styled as “Pastoral Guidance” and they are sub-titled “A Proposal for Reception.” These terms must be understood exactly. The statements were developed because the deans indicated that some members of their chapters were looking for guidance on these issues. How does a pastor who is a member of the Society respond to a request to bless a same-sex union? What kind of recommendation does a pastor who is a member of the Society offer to his or her congregation regarding the purchase and use of worship materials that avoid the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit? It is in response to questions such as these that the Leadership Council has issued these statements of pastoral guidance to the members of the Society.

These statements were crafted by the Leadership Council, composed of the deans and the officers of the Society. While individual authors provided a working draft of each statement, the drafts served only as a basis for further work at the Leadership Council retreat at the end of January. Everyone on the council contributed to the finished statements. These statements represent the consensus of the leadership and have been distributed to the members of the Society for “reception.” “Reception,” in the ecclesiastical sense, does not mean filing them away in a drawer; it means discussing, reflecting on, and internalizing what the statements propose. I do not envision the statements being amended further. They could have been developed from other starting points. They could have marshaled other arguments. They could have covered additional issues. As they stand, each statement addresses one narrow issue. Together they reflect what we taught one another at the leadership retreat and now they can be used to teach one another in chapter retreats. These do not have the authority among us that the Rule has. No one is being asked to subscribe to the statements of pastoral guidance.

While the blessing of same-sex unions and the use of inclusive God-language are “hot button” issues in certain Lutheran denominations, the Society is maintaining its stance of not being a political action group. We are not publicizing these statements or sending them to judicatory leaders to score political points. The statements are not secret. Anyone who is interested is welcome to read them. I see no problem with pastors sharing these statements with their congregation councils or congregations if that helps councils or congregations understand where their pastor is coming from on these issues. Knowledge of these statements will get out. Undoubtedly some will have their view of the Society confirmed. No one should be surprised that these statements represent the conclusions that orthodox pastors would reach on these issues. It would be newsworthy only if we concluded that we should believe, teach, and confess something different, namely, that we can in good conscience bless same-sex unions, Scripture and tradition notwithstanding, or that we can address God in terms that avoid his revealed Name.

The real purpose of these statements is to help each other remain faithful to the Word of God. That’s what the Rule and life of the Society is for. We could and probably do believe, teach, and confess these things without the statements. We could be faithful to our ordination vows without the Rule. I have no doubt that there are many faithful Lutheran pastors who have not bowed the knee to the Baal of human experience or secular culture who are not members of our Society (7,000?). But as Martin Luther insisted that even a great teacher like himself had to return regularly to the children’s catechism, so, human nature being what it is, we find that we need rules and statements to remind us of our theological commitments and moral obligations as incumbents of the pastoral office.

I personally approve of but would probably be less diligent in praying the daily prayer offices, using individual confession, or going on retreats if I had not subscribed to the Rule. I want our gay brothers and sisters in Christ to be included in the body of Christ and to receive pastoral care as needed. But the wisdom of my fellow pastors in the Society advises me not to bless their unions. I desire the approval of my professional colleagues in liturgical studies. But the encouragement offered by my fellow pastors in the Society is to promote the use of the Holy Name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit in prayer, praise, and thanksgiving, as well as in preaching and teaching. This is the discipline afforded by our ministerium in the Society of the Holy Trinity. The discipline of our life together under our Rule serves to keep us steadfast in God’s Word and faithful to our ordination vows. I thank God every day for the Society and the hundreds of good and faithful servants of the Word and the Sacraments I have come to know because of my membership in the Society.

Frank C. Senn, STS, Senior
In Memoriam: William Henry Lazareth

William H. Lazareth, STS, Bishop Emeritus of the Metropolitan New York Synod, Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) and fellow brother in the Society died on February 23, 2008 in Bar Harbor, Maine. The following reflection is contributed by Rodney Eberhardt, Dean of the Metro New York Chapter of the Society, of which Bishop Lazareth was a member.

A memorial service was held at St. Matthew’s Lutheran Church, White Plains, N.Y., April 26, 2008. We print Pr. Eberhardt’s reflection for the benefit of Society members who were not able to be present. A private funeral was held in Bar Harbor for the family.

On April 26, 2008, members of the Society of the Holy Trinity gathered with the clergy and laity of the Metropolitan New York Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America to remember and honor The Most Reverend William Henry Lazareth, STS, Bishop Emeritus of the Metro New York Synod, former head of the Faith and Order Secretariat of the World Council of Churches, distinguished professor, pastor, and ecumenist.

In the memorial Eucharist that was celebrated at St. Matthew’s Lutheran Church in White Plains, N.Y., the congregation was reminded that Bishop Lazareth’s first love was teaching. In all his varied service to the church throughout the years, he was first and foremost and always the consummate teacher. His passion for and fidelity to the Lutheran confessional tradition in and for the one holy catholic and apostolic church was the guiding principle of his lifelong service to the church. He was, as Fr. John Neuhaus reminded the congregation, one of the principal architects of a confessional vision that regarded the Lutheran confessional tradition as both evangelical and catholic. It was that vision that led Bishop Lazareth into his many ecumenical commitments with both Roman Catholics and the Orthodox. Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry, the document drafted under his direction as the head of the Faith and Order Secretariat of the World Council of Churches, was an expression of that catholic and evangelical witness and was the most significant ecumenical accomplishment of the twentieth century. This document sought to return the church to the agreed-upon foundation of the eighth and ninth centuries and to work forward toward a unity that would be visible for all the world to see. This document continues to challenge us with opportunities that we have yet to take up seriously.

The Bishop’s evangelical catholic vision and his commitment to the unity of the church was instrumental in shaping the Rule of the Society of the Holy Trinity at its inception. Bishop Lazareth was deeply grateful for the witness of the Society in a troubled time and he clearly identified with the commitments and goals of the Society. It was his last request that the memorial rites for his burial be conducted under the auspices of the Society of the Holy Trinity.

In the words of William Shakespeare, “the good is oft interred with their bones.” The greatest tribute and honor we could pay to this faithful bishop would be to pick up the legacy he has left us and renew our efforts to take seriously the challenges to ethical life and unity that he has left in his body of written and spoken work for us to appropriate. If we would honor him, let us commit ourselves not just in word but in deed to his evangelical vision of confessional commitment for the sake of the whole church of Christ. More importantly, let us renew our commitment in both word and deed to the supremacy of the biblical Word as the witness to Christ who is the Word made flesh and the Lutheran Confessions as the faithful expression of the living Word that shapes and norms the life and practice of the Lutheran Church.

Rest eternal grant him, O Lord; and let light perpetual shine upon him. Amen.

Within the Society

CHAPLAIN’S MANUALS AVAILABLE

At the request of the Senior, David Wendel, STS, who served as chaplain for the 2007 general retreat, has prepared a detailed manual for whomever is invited to serve as chaplain for general retreats.

Pr. Wendel has also prepared a manual that provides instruction and guidance for all serving as chaplains at chapter retreats of the Society. As the Society grows, there is a need for such a manual to regularize worship at chapter retreats and ensure services are in accordance with the Rule of the Society, our customs, and practices. Copies of the “Chaplain’s Manual for Chapter Retreats” have been sent via e-mail to chapter deans and will be posted on the Society Web site.

LEADERS IN PLACE FOR 2008 GENERAL RETREAT

Luther Mathsen, STS, dean of the Minnesota Chapter, will serve as chaplain for the 2008 general retreat at St. Mary of the Lake in Mundelein, Ill., October 14–16. He will be assisted by Pari Bailey, STS, also in the Minnesota Chapter, who will serve as cantor. For several years now we have had both a chaplain and a cantor working as a team to prepare and lead worship at the general retreat. They have often been members of the same chapter.

The teaching theologians for the 2008 general retreat will be Dr. Paul Lehninger, Professor of Church History at Wisconsin Lutheran College in Milwaukee, Wis., and Eugen Lehrke, STS, director of the St. Andrew by the Sea Prayer Center in Silver Bay, Minnesota. We will be focusing on two marks of the church: Holy Communion and the Office of the Keys. There is much to say about all of these marks, so the Senior has asked these brothers to address specific difficult issues. Pr. Lehninger will address the issue of “Eucharist and Church Fellowship” from a historical perspective. Pr. Lehrke will address the issue of “The Office of the Keys and the Brief Order for Confession and Forgiveness” from historical, theological, and pastoral perspectives. The Senior will arrange for responders to each of these addresses.

SAMPLE COPIES OF NEW BILINGUAL HYMNAL AVAILABLE

A complementary copy of Oramos Cantando/We Pray in Song: Songs and Psalms for Latino/Anglo Communities is available to readers of De Trinitate through the Bilingual Ministry Resource Center, based at Santa Cruz and First Lutheran Churches, in Joliet, Ill. (Keith Forni, STS, Director). Published by GIA Publications, Inc., the paperback songbook offers 86 classic and contemporary hymns...
with complete English and Spanish texts. Oramos Cantando is a preview edition of a larger Hymnal for Latino/Anglo Communities. Call Lucia Sanchez at 815-722-4800 or send an e-mail to kforni@aol.com by June 25th for your free songbook. The first 25 responses are assured a copy, postage paid.

BEST WISHES TO STEVEN TIBE tts, STS
We are happy to report that surgery for prostate cancer on our Webmaster, Steven Tibbetts, STS, has been successful and there is no indication that the cancer had spread. He has been at home recuperating and being pampered by the members of Zion Evangelical Lutheran Church in Peoria, Ill. Pr. Tibbetts, who was born in Hollywood but plays in Peoria, is grateful for the prayers of the Society.

Chapter News

CALIFORNIA CHAPTER
Dean, Richard O. Johnson, roj@nccn.net
The California Chapter met May 19–20 at St. Andrew’s Abbey in Valyermo, Calif. Our guest was the Rt. Rev. Alexei Smith, pastor of St. Andrew Russian Greek Catholic Church in El Segundo, Calif., and the Ecumenical Officer for Cardinal Mahoney, Archbishop of Los Angeles. He led us in discussion of “The Filioque and Mary: Church Dividing Issues?” We also spent some time discussing the two recent proposed statements of pastoral guidance developed by the Society’s Leadership Council. Peter Garrison, STS, served as chaplain.

CHESAPEAKE-POTOMAC CHAPTER
Dean, Michael Guy, mbguy@rcn.com
The Chesapeake-Potomac Chapter gathered at the Trinitarian Monastery and Spiritual Center in Baltimore, Md., for a 24-hour retreat, May 5–6. In addition to observance of the Liturgy of the Hours, the Eucharist was celebrated at the close of the retreat. Nine members of the chapter were present. Teaching theologian was the Rev. Dr. Robert Robinson, professor of Hebrew and Old Testament at Lutheran Theological Seminary–Philadelphia, who led the chapter in a study of “Praying and Preaching the Psalms.”

The chapter will gather for a day retreat on August 15, the Feast of Mary, Mother of Our Lord, at Church of the Holy Comforter, Washington, D.C.

Reported by Rod L. Ronneberg, STS, Chesapeake-Potomac Chapter

GREAT RIVERS CHAPTER
Dean, Timothy D. Hubert, prtim2000@yahoo.com
The Great Rivers Chapter met May 5–6 at Toddhall Retreat Center, Columbia, Ill. Our teaching theologian was John Schmeling, STS, speaking on “The Impact of Religion on North America.” Pr. Schmeling has been picked by the United Nations to participate in their study of this issue. Timothy Hubert, STS, was chaplain. We kept in our prayers our brother, Steven Tibbetts, STS, as he recovers from surgery. Nine members and two visitors were present.

GUADALUPE RIVER CHAPTER-IN-FORMATION
Contact, Ralph W. Reitmeyer, rwreit@aol.com
The Guadalupe River Chapter-in-Formation is meeting July 21–22 at the Cedarbrake Renewal Center in Belton, Tex.

MINNESOTA CHAPTER
Dean, Luther M. Mathsen, flepsyd@cannon.net
The Minnesota Chapter met April 28–29 at Christ the King Retreat Center in Buffalo, Minn., for an Easter contemplative retreat.

NORTHERN ILLINOIS CHAPTER
Dean, Keith L. Forni, kforni@aol.com
The Northern Illinois Chapter gathered for a day retreat on May 14 (Commemoration of St. Matthias, Apostle) at Gloria Dei Lutheran Church, South Bend, Ind. Jeff Zell, STS, served as host and chaplain. Dean Keith Forni, STS, preached. Common study and discussion focused on Reconstructing Pastoral Theology: A Christological Foundation, by Andrew Purves. (Westminster John Knox Press, 2004).

A summer social gathering is being proposed, with an evening picnic and concert at Chicago’s Millennium Park (Grant Park Music Festival / Pritzker Pavilion). For details, contact the dean at 815-722-4800 or kforni@aol.com.

ROCKY MOUNTAIN CHAPTER
Dean, Brad Everett, everettsts@standardab.ca
The Rocky Mountain Chapter is pleased to have Fred Schumacher, STS, as the teaching theologian for our May 25–27 retreat at the FCJ Retreat Centre in Calgary, Alberta. We have arranged for Pr. Schumacher to give a public lecture on icons before the retreat, to which we have invited local Lutheran as well as Orthodox congregations.

Thanks to the member from Indiana who sent me information on a pastor interested in the Society who recently moved to our part of the world (southern Saskatchewan), I have had the chance to exchange e-mails with him. One of our members who is closer (only five hours away as opposed to eight) will attend his installation service. We have had two seminarians attend our retreats (no small feat as the seminary is at least six hours away) based on contact with our members. Just a reminder of the importance of keeping in contact and sharing information with each other.

SANGRE DE CRISTO CHAPTER
Dean, David M. Wendel, pr-wendel@saintlukes-cs.org
The Sangre de Cristo Chapter, together with the Guadalupe River Chapter-in-Formation, met May 8–9 at the Franciscan Retreat Center, Colorado Springs, Colo., with 11 in attendance. Frank Senn, STS Senior, presented on the topic “The Development of the Eucharistic Prayer and Usage within Lutheranism.” Peter Jacobson, STS, served as chaplain. In attendance were pastors from Phoenix, Ariz.; Wichita and Wilson, Kans.; Denver and Colorado Springs, Colo.; and Universal City, Tex., as well as one seminarian and one Baptist minister in the ELCA candidacy process. Parish visitations have also begun and, in spite of the great distances between our parishes, will be completed this year.

Contact, Stephen L. Stanfill, slst1@freedom.net
The Sangre de Cristo Chapter gathered for a day retreat in June at the Franciscan Retreat Center, Colorado Springs, Colo., with 11 in attendance. Dean David Wendel, STS, and the Sangre de Cristo Chapter are pleased to have Fred Schumacher, STS, as the teaching theologian for our May 25–27 retreat at the FCJ Retreat Centre in Calgary, Alberta. We have arranged for Pr. Schumacher to give a public lecture on icons before the retreat, to which we have invited local Lutheran as well as Orthodox congregations.

Thanks to the member from Indiana who sent me information on a pastor interested in the Society who recently moved to our part of the world (southern Saskatchewan), I have had the chance to exchange e-mails with him. One of our members who is closer (only five hours away as opposed to eight) will attend his installation service. We have had two seminarians attend our retreats (no small feat as the seminary is at least six hours away) based on contact with our members. Just a reminder of the importance of keeping in contact and sharing information with each other.
Fourth, the marks reveal rich teaching possibilities for our parish communities. They give new depth and meaning to parish realities like children’s sermons, biblical study groups, and pastoral visits. The marks lead us into Martin Luther’s Large Catechism where understandings can increase in Baptism, Forgiveness, and Supper. The marks immerse us in the teachings of the early Church fathers along with the documents in the Book of Concord.

Fifth, the marks show how free-wheeling Lutheran church structures have become as they attempt to create templates other than the one imbedded in the Holy Trinity. They show, too, the sterility and dryness of those same structures as they, consciously and unconsciously, emerge as the Pharisees we are always confronting in the Gospels.

Sixth, the marks sort through the history and practices of the Orthodox, Roman Catholic, and Anglican traditions. The distinctive (though not exclusive) Lutheran view is that a church’s structure is bracketed by the Word and the Cross, the exclusive realities and actions of the Holy Trinity. Such a perspective also exposes the puzzle of Lutheran church structures trying to borrow or learn from Protestant or non-denominational churches that are captive to the culture surrounding them.

The world’s life, driven by its prince, Satan, will fight this concentration on many levels, diluting our attempts to proclaim, serve, and teach the Lord’s Word. That is why we have been inundated with popular teaching and shallow preaching. But the world’s life, thankfully, has been overwhelmed by the Life of the Holy Trinity. That Life surfaces in the Church’s seven marks whenever the Lord’s Word is having its lasering effect of shattering and rebuilding. We are deeply grateful for that saving reality and for the authentic template that streams from it!

Carl A. Voges, STS, Vicar

**DE TRINITATE**

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*Editor: Constance R. Seddon*

*Editorial office: 6239 Rosebury Ave., 1E, St. Louis, MO 63105 / 314-721-8262 / editor@societyholytrinity.org*

*To be placed on the De Trinitate mailing list or to report a change of address, please contact the Secretary, below.*

*Senior: Pr. Frank C. Senn, Immanuel Lutheran Church, 616 Lake Street, Evanston, IL 60201 / 847-864-4464 / senior@societyholytrinity.org*

*Vicar: Pr. Carl A. Voges, 129 Pond Ridge Road, Columbia, SC 29223 / 803-788-6656 or 803-269-6656 / vicar@societyholytrinity.org*

*Secretary: Pr. John E. Priest, Immanuel Lutheran Church, 17 High Street, Delhi, NY 13753 / 607-746-2098 / secretary@societyholytrinity.org*

*Bursar: Pr. Mark A. Hoffman, St. Paul Lutheran Church, 324 North Street, Millersburg, PA 17061 / 717-692-2141 / bursar@societyholytrinity.org*

*Society Web site: www.societyholytrinity.org*