

DE TRINITATE

Newsletter of the Society of the Holy Trinity

Societas Trinitatis Sanctae

Volume 12, Number 4, After Pentecost 2009

From the Senior

I don't know if I should thank you for electing me as your Senior again, but it is an honor and I am humbled by the thought that you think there is still some leadership left in me. I recognize that we are in a critical time in the life of the Lutheran churches in North America. We may even be looking at a reconfiguration of Lutheranism. We are in the midst of reform and renewal.

Ecclesia semper reformanda. "The church must always be reformed." This is a medieval idea that came out of the monasteries. We regard a 16th century Augustinian friar named Martin Luther as The Reformer. When his reform movement became a church established by law, it too needed reform from time to time. We think of Pietism and the 19th century confessional revival as two reform movements in the Lutheran church.

Since the founding of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) in the context of ideologically driven culture wars, there have been several calls for reform. "Call to Faithfulness" conferences and 9.5 Theses were among them. The Society of the Holy Trinity grew out of calls for reform and renewal in American Lutheranism. We have focused on the renewal and reform of the Holy Ministry as a means to renewing and reforming the Church (see AC 5).

In the wake of the 2009 ELCA Churchwide Assembly, Lutheran-CORE (formerly Coalition for Reform, now Coalition for Renewal) gathered some 1200 people at Fishers, Ind., near Indianapolis in September 2009 to propose forming a free-standing synod that will include ELCA congregations and non-ELCA congregations. I think there is promise in this proposal, if groups that have quite different, and sometimes diametrically opposite, views can transcend those differences and organize an annual convocation in which congregations come together to do what the Church needs to do: worship, study the Bible, discuss mission strategies and congregational life, engage in call processes and provide mission support, and transcend the culture wars in a post-denominational way.

In the 1530s there were a lot of ideas about reforming the Church. Luther had been calling for a free synod under the presidency of the emperor rather than the pope, to deal with the differences in teaching and proposals for reform. He called for such a synod one last time in his 1539 treatise *On the Councils and the Church*. People were confused about where the true Church was found. He said, "not in Rome; not even in Wittenberg," but where the Word of God is preached

and the Sacraments of Christ are administered. In other words, not in the churchwide structure, and not even in the local judicatory, even if that local judicatory is more to your liking. He expanded on this to discuss seven marks of the Church, which our Society has spent the last three years studying.

Now a group of STS pastors has formed a Seven Marks Society to join CORE (hopefully along with many of their congregations) to try to influence it in the evangelical catholic direction. There is no formal relationship between the Society of the Holy Trinity and this new Seven Marks Society, and our Society will not be a member of Lutheran CORE.

Nevertheless, as our Vicar, Carl Voges, STS, who first proposed studying the seven marks, said in his sermon at the close of the general retreat, these seven marks will continue to pulse through our common life. They are both descriptive and prescriptive. If you want to know where the real Church is, look to see if these marks are present. But renew these marks within the life of the Church, and the Church will be reformed.

Frank C. Senn, STS, Senior

Report of the Secretary

The Society of the Holy Trinity met in general retreat September 29 to October 1, 2009, at the Conference Center of the University of St. Mary of the Lake in Mundelein, Ill. In attendance were 211 members and friends of the Society from across the United States and Canada.

During the retreat, Frank Senn, STS, was elected by pure ecclesiastical ballot—which requires a unanimous vote—as Senior of the Society for a three-year term. The first ballot nominated 30 members of the Society. Senn was elected on the fifth ballot. Six deans, elected by their chapters during the past year, were also installed: Rodney L. Eberhardt, dean of the Metro New York Chapter; Richard O. Johnson, dean of the California Chapter; Mark W. Knappe, dean of the Wisconsin Chapter; Lawrence R. Recla, dean of the Florida Chapter; Ronald C. Yergey, dean of the Delaware River Chapter; and Jacob Larry Yoder, dean of the Carolinas Chapter.

Thirty-three pastors subscribed to the *Rule* of the Society:

Eric D. Ash, Sr., Passavant Chapter
C. Lynn Bailey, California Chapter
Timothy Allan Bean, Great Rivers Chapter
Daniel V. Biles III, Susquehanna Chapter
Catherine Braasch, Sangre de Cristo Chapter
Robert Thomas Byrne, Carolinas Chapter

Janice Ann Campbell, member at large
 David A. Charlton, Florida Chapter
 Wendell L. Eisener, Great Lakes-St. Lawrence Chapter
 Robert Louis Endruschat, Florida Chapter
 David Garwick, Minnesota Chapter
 Ida Iverson, Florida Chapter
 Andrew Wayne Jagow, Chesapeake-Potomac Chapter
 David Michael Klak, member at large
 Kelly James Leary, Wisconsin Chapter
 Steven Ray Little, Sangre de Cristo Chapter
 Evan Scott McClanahan, member at large
 Nathan C. Minnich, Susquehanna Chapter
 Ronald Andrew Orovitz, Carolinas Chapter
 Edwin Detrick Peterman, member at large
 Karl N. Redelsheimer, Northern Illinois Chapter
 Elizabeth Schuster, Susquehanna Chapter
 Matthew Douglas Schuster, Susquehanna Chapter
 Philip James Secker, New England Chapter
 Jeffrey W. Shealy, Carolinas Chapter
 Matthew A. Short, Wisconsin Chapter
 Frederick Clark Smith, Florida Chapter
 Ronald William Springer, Florida Chapter
 Matthew Casey Stabe, Passavant Chapter
 Peter Van Katwyk, Rocky Mountain Chapter
 James Lee Wagner, Sangre de Cristo Chapter
 Michael Willis Roy Wellman, Great Lakes-St. Lawrence Chapter
 Samuel David Zumwalt, Carolinas Chapter

When pastors subscribe to the *Rule*, they make the following vow: “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, (name), hereby subscribe to the *Rule* of the Society of the Holy Trinity, asking the help of God and seeking the support of the Society.”

Copies of the *Rule* are available on the Internet at www.societyholytrinity.org or you may request a hard copy from Rev. John E. Priest, 17 High Street, Delhi, NY 13753.

The next general retreat of the Society will be at the same location in Mundelein, Ill., October 19–21, 2010.

John E. Priest, STS, Secretary

Report of the Bursar

The following report from the bursar of the Society is for the fiscal year beginning July 1, 2008, and ending June 30, 2009.

BALANCE FORWARD, 6/30/08:	\$95,944.99
Deposits:	\$75,922.96
Interest:	174.37
TOTAL DEPOSITS	\$76,097.33
DISBURSEMENTS	
Administration:	\$ 661.93
Fund raising:	0.00
General & council retreats:	42,077.38
Newsletter:	3,300.00
Chapter visitation:	1,811.32
Travel equalization:	16,141.93
Sem. support:	0.00
TOTAL DISBURSEMENTS	(\$63,992.56)
GENERAL ACCOUNT BALANCE	\$108,049.76
Mark A. Hoffman, STS, Bursar	

Supporting Our Students

Once again at the general chapter meeting this year there were many questions about the support our Society could offer seminarians and the concern many had for such students at a number of seminaries, particularly in the ELCA. Our pan-Lutheran nature and the subsequent differences in our theological education, the sheer number of students, and significant number of seminaries and divinity schools, all make it difficult for us to know, let alone support, all those seminarians who are sympathetic to the work of our Society.

Nevertheless, we can do a few things quite easily. First, if you know of students who understand and support the work of the Society, then be sure that they are invited to local chapter and even general chapter retreats. I would encourage each chapter to set up a small fund to help support such seminarians with their registration costs for local retreats. The Society as a whole already bears the cost of registrations for seminarians to our general chapter retreats. It may also be that chapters can provide mentors to such students, encouraging them in their studies and in their candidacy process. Both of these activities foster the strength of our ministerium into the future.

In addition, we have some funds available to help support the financial needs of seminarians sympathetic to our work and ministry through the Society. Within the next few weeks we will be soliciting names of seminarians so that some of these funds can be distributed. If you know of a seminarian who could use such a gift, then I would urge you to contact the dean of your local chapter or me directly. As noted at the general chapter retreat, such cash gifts are not to be considered on a *quid pro quo* basis—that is, “we will give you the money if you agree to join the Society later.” However, we would hope that those receiving such funds are sympathetic to, and have perhaps already been involved in, some of the work of the Society.

Finally, our funds are available for distribution only through the generosity of some individuals and congregations. If you feel so called to continue the support of such work please be in touch with me or our Senior or Vicar for more information. Contributions for seminarian support should be sent to the Society secretary, Rev. John E. Priest, 17 High Street, Delhi, NY 13753. Please earmark checks for this purpose.

Patrick J. Rooney, STS
 Chair, Student Support Committee

Surprised by . . . Reading

On June 5, 2009, Immanuel Lutheran Church, Delhi, N.Y., was cordially received into membership in The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, Atlantic District, along with its pastor, John E. Priest, STS secretary. It was the end of a long journey and the beginning of a new one. “The Move,” as John has come to think of it, was not without its bittersweet aspects, but he is convinced that it was the right thing for them to do, whether or not it would be for anyone else. John continues to cherish all his colleagues in the Society of the Holy Trinity and covets your prayers. Following are his reflections on some of the documents he read as part of his application for membership into the Missouri Synod via the colloquy program.

Perhaps one of the best kept secrets among Lutherans today is the series of teaching documents produced by The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod’s Commission on Theology and Church Relations (CTCR). I was only vaguely aware of the existence of these documents and, quite frankly, not at all inclined to read them until I took up the task as a much dismayed pastor of the ELCA considering the possibility of applying for membership in the Missouri Synod’s ministerium through the colloquy program. As I read through the documents, I began to wonder why nobody had ever previously suggested that I do so. Hence this article to the readers of *De Trinitate*—to put a bug in your ear.

The CTCR, in case you don’t know, is the official organ of the Missouri Synod for addressing current matters of theological concern and is, at least as far as I can tell, the closest thing there is to a teaching magisterium in contemporary American Lutheranism. The series of 38 CTCR documents produced over recent decades covers a wide range of topics from reproductive cloning to end-of-life decisions; from gambling to divorce and remarriage; from the theology and practice of ministry to—yes—the role of women in the church. There are many others—too numerous to mention here—but you can find a complete listing at <http://www.lcms.org/ctcr> (click on “Documents and Opinions”) or in a Concordia Publishing House catalog (on line at <http://www.cph.org>, search “CTCR”).

The specificity of some of these documents surprised me—for the good. For instance, one of them addresses the “Left Behind” book series and its predisposition to premillennial dispensationalism. A number of the texts deal with issues related to human sexuality and are, at least to my mind, a breath of much needed fresh air in the midst of our present quandaries. Many of the documents bear in a helpful way on questions pastors everywhere have to face as they strive for faithfulness in parish ministry. It’s good, I’m thinking, that somebody somewhere is tending to this task in a way that aims most seriously at scriptural and confessional integrity.

That’s not to say, I hasten to add, that nobody else is trying to do that. It is the very purpose of the Society of the Holy Trinity. But we in the Society, by our own discernment, are doing it at “the fringes” of the Church. The CTCR, on the other hand, is doing it at the heart of one of our denominations. It’s too bad, I say, it’s such a well-kept secret.

Well—maybe not anymore.

John E. Priest, STS, Secretary

Chapter News

CHESAPEAKE-POTOMAC CHAPTER

Dean, Wollom A. Jensen, wally.a.jensen@gmail.com

The chapter will meet in retreat November 30 to December 1 at the Trinitarian Retreat Center in Baltimore, Md. The focus of the retreat will be the *Rule* of the Society.

FLORIDA CHAPTER

Dean, Lawrence R. Recla, larryrecla@comcast.net

At this year’s general retreat the Florida Chapter was privileged to have five clergy subscribe to the *Rule* and become members of our chapter.

A chapter retreat with the theme “A Liturgical Practicum: Sharing and Comparing, Confirming and Changing Elements and Styles of Presiding and Celebrating the Liturgies of the Church” was held November 2–3 at San Pedro Center, Winter Park, Fla., with 21 attendees (15 clergy, 3 deacons, 3 deacon candidates). Presentors for that retreat were Rev. Dr. Mark D. Luttio (Ph.D. in Liturgics, University of Notre Dame), Robert L. Endruschat, STS, and Lawrence R. Recla, STS, Florida Chapter dean.

GREAT RIVERS CHAPTER

Dean, Timothy D. Hubert, prtim2000@yahoo.com

The Great Rivers Chapter will meet November 30 to December 1 at Toddhall, Columbia, Ill. Larry Vogel, STS, will be teaching theologian on the topic of Christian Marriage; Ken Tegtmeier, STS, will be chaplain. We welcome Pr. Vogel to the Great Rivers Chapter by transfer. And we welcome new member Tim Bean, STS, who signed the *Rule* at the 2009 general retreat. We will also have the election of a dean.

PASSAVANT CHAPTER

Dean, Kevin Anderson, pastoranderson@windstream.net

The Passavant Chapter will meet in retreat December 8–9 at St. Paul of the Cross Retreat Center on the south side of Pittsburgh, Pa. Brian Evans, STS, will lead us in a discussion of Avery Dulles’ book *Models of the Church*. Debra Thompson, STS, will be chaplain, and Bob Hawk, STS, will be confessor.

SANGRE DE CRISTO CHAPTER

Dean, David M. Wendel, pr-wendel@saintlukes-cs.org

The chapter was blessed with three new members subscribing to the *Rule*. Peter Jacobson, STS, represented the chapter well as chaplain of the general retreat.

We will meet for a 24-hour Advent retreat December 3–4, beginning at 1:00 p.m. The retreat will be at the Franciscan Retreat Center, Mt. St. Francis, Colorado Springs, Colo. The retreat will be “quieter,” with much time for Advent silence, meditation, and reading. We will also look forward to our parish celebrations of the Christ Mass, and retreatants are asked to bring bulletins, worship folders, etc., that reflect our parish Christ Mass liturgies.

SUSQUEHANNA CHAPTER

Dean, Patrick Rooney, pastorrooney@christlutheranyork.com

The chapter will gather in retreat November 30 to December 1 at the Convent of the Sacred Heart, Danville, Pa. Our teaching theologian will be Amy Schiffrin, STS, who will lead us in a Practicum on Presiding. Rod Ronnenberg, STS, will speak about the Structure and Content of Eucharistic Prayers. Pr. Ronnenberg has also been appointed by the Senior as visitor to the chapter to oversee the election of a dean.

UPSTATE NEW YORK CHAPTER

Dean, Troy A. Mulvaine, mulvaine@msn.com

The Upstate New York Chapter of the Society will gather at the Stella Maris Retreat Center on December 3–4 in Skaneateles, N.Y. Dean Troy Mulvaine will serve as teaching theologian for the retreat, with a discussion and presentation of

“Luther and Islam: The Christian Apology in the Face of Islam.” The chapter will host guest STS Vicar Carl Voges as we seek the guidance of the Holy Spirit in the election of a dean.

WISCONSIN CHAPTER

Dean, Mark W. Knappe, pastor@fallsgloriadei.com

The chapter was pleased to welcome two new members who signed the *Rule* at the general retreat. Matt Short, STS, serves the Lord in Slinger, Wis., and Kelly Leary, STS, in Merrill, Wis.

The chapter gathered for retreat on November 9–10 with the Northern Illinois Chapter. Jim Clark, STS, served as preacher at the Eucharist, and Rev. Larry Myer, retired Air Force chaplain, gave a presentation on “Faith and the Pentagon.”

From the Vicar

For a number of weeks prior to the general retreat and in the weeks following, we have been exposed again (through the First Lessons for each day) to significant portions of 1st and 2nd Kings. These instructive portions included a description of Josiah’s reign in the early 600s BC. Workmen had begun to repair the temple and in the middle of that effort the book of the law was found! An initial reaction is: How in Sheol did the book get lost? Reading through the reforms that Josiah introduced to recover the lostness, however, it is clear that the book slipped into obscurity because the Lord’s people were busily concentrating on their own lives.

It reminds us of the realities with which we contend today as the Church’s pastors. When one considers all the warping and diluting that passes for the proclamation of the Gospel, it is clear that this concentration on self is making it happen. In the Romans letter, Paul points out that when the Lord’s people get it in their heads that they are going to do things their way, the Lord lets them go. These attitudes and actions generate an enormous amount of chaos, chaos that is intended by the Lord to seize their attention so they will turn back to him, repentant of what they have done and faithful to what he does.

At the general retreat it was noted that our three-year study on the Church’s marks was officially coming to an end. But it was also noted that our exposure to those marks is really turning us to plunge even more deeply into them, to let them define our exercise of the Church’s ministry, and to let them become the authentic authority for all church structures, including the Lutheran ones!

Running underneath and through these marks is the Lord’s Word, the only reality that can break down the world’s life and set us in the Life of the crucified and resurrected Son. The world’s life, given us at birth, is always seeking to emerge and endure. It is attractively presented and skillfully managed by the unholy trio of sin, Satan, and death. The marks, bracketed by the Word and the Cross, are always dripping with the rescuing and sustaining actions of the Lord God. They are continuously confronting the world’s life, loosening the grip it has on us, and re-setting us in the Trinity’s Life.

These marks, because they are imbedded in the Lord’s actions, make it possible for pastors and parishes to exercise their ministry in cultures that dismiss the Lord’s Life, in churches where one drive is to be successful, and in churches where another drive is to be legalistic.

Thankfully, the marks stun us when we lay them up against current thinking and practice in our Lutheran church structures: (1) Left to our own thinking, we will assert that we can create our own marks, shoving to the side what the Lord would give us. (2) Left to our own thinking, we will assert that these marks need to be re-worked so they will appeal to the millions of people whose lives are empty. (3) Left to our own thinking, we will assert that these marks are vital, but we can improve them so they are protected from the world’s realities and will endure.

As the Lord God continues to immerse us in these marks, we can wholeheartedly rely on his guidance through all the chaotic warping and diluting that surrounds the Church today. We will see them streaming from the Scriptures and the writings of the early church fathers. We will see them in the Large and Small Catechisms of Martin Luther. We will see them informing the education that goes on in our parish communities. We will see the marks emphasized in the writings of Loehe and Krauth, Walther and Pieper. We will lay them up against the histories of the various Lutheran church structures. We will lay them up against the Orthodox, Roman, Anglican, and Protestant structures. We will notice their presence or absence in a book on Jesus by a Roman Catholic pope, in a lecture on pastoral formation by a Roman Catholic priest, or in a review of world liturgies by a Lutheran pastor.

The marks, because they are brimming with the Trinity’s Life, will see to it that the proclamation, serving, and teaching of the Gospel does not get lost. The marks will give us the nerve and the clarity to see through the roiling chaos in the Lutheran church structures. The marks will continually remind us that there is a rescue for the people who are busy concentrating on their own lives. The marks will keep us focused on the ministry we are privileged to exercise in the one, holy, catholic, and apostolic Church.

Carl A. Voges, STS, Vicar

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