

# DE TRINITATE

Newsletter of the Society of the Holy Trinity

*Societas Trinitatis Sanctae*

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## From the Senior

What does the “reconfiguration” of North American Lutheranism actually look like? As I have traveled to congregations served by pastors of the Society of the Holy Trinity and attended STS retreats, I have witnessed various scenarios. In a few situations the congregation and pastor are ready to leave their denomination and the vote to do so is overwhelming. In other situations a congregation is chomping at the bit to leave, but the pastor is reluctant. Or the pastor would like the congregation to leave, but the votes aren’t there. Or a majority of the congregation would like to leave, but can’t muster a two-thirds majority to do so. Some members leave anyway. A pastor no longer wants to serve in a church body the pastor regards as heretical or apostate and colloquizes into another church body. Some are wondering, in the light of Pope Benedict XVI’s provision for an Anglican ordinariate, whether some such arrangement might also be provided for a Lutheran rite. In the meantime, some micro-Lutheran bodies are about to become less micro, new church bodies are being proposed, and an inter-Lutheran association or free-standing synod is in formation. Even pastors who remain in their church body with no intention to leave it for another are affected by all this reconfiguration. We were also advised by a pastor of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod at the STS Leadership Council retreat not to think that the LCMS is uninterested in all this movement within and out of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America or Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada, some of which is into the Missouri synod’s own ranks.

How is the Society of the Holy Trinity to respond to all this reconfiguration? Certainly many of our members are involved in it. For some it is exhilarating. Others are dealing with tremendous tension in their congregations and within themselves. We expect that these enthusiasms and tensions will be brought to chapter meetings and probably also to this year’s general retreat. The Society itself is not involved in the reconfiguration. But as a ministerium we have to encourage and support our members in their efforts to discern how to be faithful to their ordination vows.

It was timely and undoubtedly providential that the Leadership Council last year and this took up the issue of the charism of the Society. It began with an inquiry into what the charism of the founders was and whether we still see that in our members today. We quickly achieved consensus that the charism of faithfulness that we discerned in the founders is still shared among the members today, and that members (old

as well as new) are continually formed in this charism. We also came to understand that a gift of the Holy Spirit is intended to build up the whole Church. As far as the Society is concerned, the gift of faithfulness cultivated in our life together in retreat, prayer, confession, study, and conversation serves to renew the whole Church by renewing the ministry we exercise as pastors of the Church. The life of the Society as we have established it must go on in the midst of the reconfiguration of North American Lutheranism, because our gift and service are needed now more than ever. Please read and discuss in chapter retreats the pastoral statement “The Society of the Holy Trinity: Its Gift and Service,” posted on the Society Web site.

One of the issues we must give attention to is what it means to be the Church of Jesus Christ. We have spent three years studying the marks of the Church. Now we need to study the Church itself. As these reconfigurations take place, what have been the blessings and pitfalls of ecclesiology in the Lutheran tradition? What should the Church be on the basis of Scripture and our Confessions? What new theological configurations of the body of Christ can we imagine for the future? These are the topics we need to take up at the next general retreat. I am in the process of inviting our teaching theologians for the 2010 general retreat. I am sharing my own thoughts about our Lutheran identity as evangelical catholics in some chapters that I am visiting this year. I recommend, to begin, digging out and reading an early work by Jaroslav Pelikan, *Obedient Rebels: Catholic Substance and Protestant Principle in Luther’s Reformation* (New York and Evanston: Harper and Row, 1964). Maybe we should also study *Lumen Gentium*, the Dogmatic Constitution on the Church promulgated by the Second Vatican Ecumenical Council.

The “marks” tell us where the visible Church is to be found. But what is the Church? *Lumen Gentium* speaks of it as a “mystery,” a divine reality inserted into human history. The Church is a divine reality because it is created by the Holy Trinity and the Holy Spirit dwells within it. The historical dimension of the Church is signified by the term “people of God.” This indicates continuity between Israel and the Church, which Luther also noted in his lectures on Genesis. The characteristics of the Church are noted in the Nicene Creed: it is one, holy, catholic, and apostolic. There is much to unpack in each of these terms. It is said that ecclesiology, the doctrine of the Church, has been Lutheranism’s shortcoming. The Reformation made do with whatever structures could be salvaged from the pre-Reformation Catholic polity. We have managed without a coherence between theory and

practice ever since. One would hope that a reconfiguration of American Lutheranism would provide an opportunity to give fresh attention to issues of ecclesiology. Perhaps the Society can help in this task.

Frank C. Senn, STS, Senior

## Leadership Council Report

The Leadership Council of the Society of the Holy Trinity met February 9–11 at the St. Christopher Conference Center outside of Charleston, S.C. The Leadership Council, consisting of the officers and deans of the Society, wishes to thank Amy Schiffrin, STS, for serving as chaplain for the retreat.

Following is a summary of some of the council's determinations:

- There are currently some pastors in the Society who are "in limbo" regarding their relationship with their jurisdictions. It was the consensus of the council that the Senior should use his discretion with respect to their membership in the Society.
- A pastoral statement, "The Society of the Holy Trinity: Its Gift and Service," was completed. It is posted on line at the Society's Web site: [www.societyholytrinity.org](http://www.societyholytrinity.org).
- There was a far-ranging discussion regarding the ongoing formation of Society members.
- Resolutions were passed enabling more advantageous investment of the Society's endowment fund.
- Deans will soon receive new application forms for scholarship grants from the Society's Seminarian Support Fund.
- \$2,000 was set aside for this year to assist chapters in bringing seminarians to chapter retreats.
- The 2009 general retreat was reviewed and planning was begun for the 2010 general retreat, which will be held at St. Mary's of the Lake, Mundelein, Ill., October 19–21. The teaching will focus on the doctrine of the Church. There was consensus that a business meeting should not be held at the general retreat unless necessary, but there should be opportunity to introduce chapter deans and new members.
- There was a consensus that the Society encourage members of congregations to pray for and contribute to the Society. Carl Voges, STS Vicar, will develop a brochure for this purpose that can be used as a bulletin insert. It was suggested that an offering for the Society be received on Trinity Sunday.

A complete report on the business of the Leadership Council is available from John E. Priest, STS Secretary. He can be contacted at [secretary@societyholytrinity.org](mailto:secretary@societyholytrinity.org).

John E. Priest, STS, Secretary

## Financial Support for Seminarians

Through the generous support of congregations and individuals, the Seminarian Support Fund is now able to offer cash grants to seminarians who support the mission and ministry of the Society of the Holy Trinity. A notice has been sent to all deans, accompanied by a simple form, asking them to forward names and information about such students by no later

than March 22. In order to assist the deans, we are also inviting all our members to assist us in this process by identifying recipients for these grants.

Therefore, if you know of a seminarian who could use some financial support and who is considered supportive of the charism of the Society, please contact the dean of your local chapter; the dean will let you know what information is necessary. If you are a member at large, please contact me at [pastorrooney@christlutheranyork.com](mailto:pastorrooney@christlutheranyork.com) and I will forward the form to you. The grants are available to Lutheran seminarians in any year who are currently enrolled in any seminary, regardless of denominational affiliation, or who have already been accepted for classes beginning in the fall of 2010.

Patrick J. Rooney, STS  
Chair, Seminarian Support Fund

## Chapter News

### DELAWARE RIVER CHAPTER

Dean, Ronald C. Yergey, [ryergey@me.com](mailto:ryergey@me.com)

The Delaware River Chapter of the Society of the Holy Trinity met in retreat February 1–2 at the St. Francis Retreat House in Easton, Pa. Five chapter members, two visitors, and a seminarian were present for the retreat. Our teaching theologian was Brett Jenkins, STS, who focused our work, our discussion, and our attention on "The Authority of the Word of God." Ronald Yergey, STS, served as chaplain and preacher. As always, the folks at the retreat house treated us as VIP guests, for which we are always most thankful.

Our next retreat is scheduled at the same location on June 14–15.

### FLORIDA CHAPTER

Dean, Lawrence R. Recla, [larryrecla@comcast.net](mailto:larryrecla@comcast.net)

The March 1–2 lenten retreat of the Florida Chapter was held at the San Pedro Conference Center, Winter Park, Fla, with over 30 in attendance, including five ELCA deacons and two deacon candidates. Senior Frank Senn led the retreat, teaching about the prospects of evangelical catholicity and doing a workshop on the use of the Breviary.

Our June 14–15 retreat will be led by John Hannah, STS, on "The History of American Lutheranism" at the San Pedro Center.

At the 2009 general retreat, the Rev. Ronald W. Springer of Christ Lutheran Church, Fort Lauderdale, Fla., subscribed to the *Rule*; Pr. Springer entered the Church Triumphant, February 7, 2010. Robert Endruschat, STS, was vital in providing ministry to the Springer family and parish. "Rest eternal grant to him, O Lord, and let light perpetual shine upon him."

### GREAT RIVERS CHAPTER

Dean, Timothy D. Hubert, [prtim2000@yahoo.com](mailto:prtim2000@yahoo.com)

The Great Rivers Chapter met in retreat, February 7–9 at the Toddhall Retreat and Conference Center, Columbia, Ill. Ten members were in attendance. Fritz Baue, STS, gave a presentation based on his new book *Creation: A Literary, Apologetic and Doctrinal Approach*. Tim Hubert, STS, was chaplain. Participants studied Chapter 8 of the *Rule* ("Ecumenical Commitments") and began a second series dis-

cussion on the Augsburg Confession, beginning with the first article, "God." Lively discussion, good worship and fellowship, and more quiet time than usual provided a wonderful retreat.

#### GUADALUPE RIVER CHAPTER

Dean, Ralph W. Reitmeyer, [rwreit@aol.com](mailto:rwreit@aol.com)

The Guadalupe River Chapter met in retreat on November 16–17, 2009, at Cedarbreak Retreat Center near Belton, Tex., with 18 clergy and 5 laity in attendance. Janice Campbell, STS, was our chaplain and Ryan Mills, STS, proclaimed the Word at our celebration of the Eucharist. Senior Frank Senn served as our teaching theologian, speaking on the topic "Reviewing Advent and Christmas: The Tradition and Pastoral Possibilities." The Senior also conducted an election for dean. Ralph W. Reitmeyer, STS, was elected.

The chapter met February 22–23 at Cedarbreak with 15 clergy and 2 laity attending. David Klak, STS, was chaplain and Evan McClanahan, STS, preacher. James Bennett, STS, former bishop of the Southwestern Texas Synod of the ELCA, was our teaching theologian, leading us in an examination of the fifth and seventh articles of the Augsburg Confession.

#### INDIANA CHAPTER

Dean, Jeff S. Zell, [jeff.zell@yahoo.com](mailto:jeff.zell@yahoo.com)

November 2–3, 2009, the Indiana Chapter-in-Formation met in retreat at Benedict Inn and Conference Center, Indianapolis, Ind., to establish itself as a newly formed Indiana Chapter. Jeff Zell was elected dean, with Senior Frank Senn officiating at the election.

The next retreat is April 26–27 at Benedict Inn. Thelma Megill-Cobbler, STS, will serve as our teaching theologian.

#### IOWA CHAPTER

Dean, David A. Aanonson, [pastor@ctlutheranic.org](mailto:pastor@ctlutheranic.org)

The Iowa Chapter of STS met in retreat February 22–23 at American Martyrs Retreat House in Cedar Falls, Iowa. There were 14 members and 5 visitors in attendance, includ-

ing Frank Senn, STS Senior. Barbara Wills, STS, served as chaplain; Dr. Senn was teaching theologian, presenting on the topic "Rome, Reformation, and Reunion Revisited," a paper he is preparing for a *Festschrift* for theologian Carl Braaten. Confessions were heard by James Harbaugh, STS; refreshments were provided by Marshall Hahn and Christopher Staley, both STS. David A. Aanonson, STS, was elected dean.

The next chapter meeting is May 3–4 at American Martyrs Retreat House, Cedar Falls, Iowa.

#### METRO NEW YORK CHAPTER

Dean, Rodney L. Eberhardt, [srpastorstlukes@verison.net](mailto:srpastorstlukes@verison.net)

The Metro New York Chapter met on February 22–23 at St. Ignatius Retreat House, Manhasset, N.Y. Pastor Thomas Greene was the presenter on the healing ministry of the church.

On May 17–18 the chapter will have its annual business and reflection retreat at St. Ignatius, and members will receive their visitation schedule for the summer months.

#### PASSAVANT CHAPTER

Dean, Kevin Anderson, [pastoranderson@windstream.net](mailto:pastoranderson@windstream.net)

The Passavant Chapter met February 22–23 at St. Paul of the Cross Retreat Center on the South Side of Pittsburgh, Pa. Bob Hawk, STS, was chaplain, Eric Ash, STS, was confessor, and James Nestingen, STS, was teaching theologian. The chapter prayed through the election of a dean, resulting in the election of Kevin Anderson, STS. We discussed how mutual visitation was going within the chapter. The chapter also heard a report on the recent Leadership Council retreat and received a paper on ordination prepared by Pr. Hawk.

#### SANGRE DE CRISTO CHAPTER

Dean, David M. Wendel, [pr-wendel@saintlukes-cs.org](mailto:pr-wendel@saintlukes-cs.org)

The Sangre de Cristo Chapter met for a quiet Advent retreat December 3–4, 2009, with 6 in attendance at the Franciscan Retreat Center in Colorado Springs, Colo.

The chapter has a joint retreat with the California Chapter May 24–25, in California.

We will have a summer retreat July 12–13 at the Franciscan Retreat Center, Colorado Springs, with special guest Roman Catholic Archbishop of Denver Charles Chaput, who will join us in a discussion of the Ecumenical Commitments stated in Chapter 8 of our *Rule*. We will also discuss the new Anglican Rite provision recently announced by the Vatican. In attendance to meet with our ecumenical guest will be Senior Frank Senn. Members of the Society who would like to attend this special retreat in July are asked to please send a message to Dean David Wendel, at the e-mail address above, as soon as possible.

#### SUSQUEHANNA CHAPTER

Dean, Paddy Rooney, [pastorrooney@christlutheranyork.com](mailto:pastorrooney@christlutheranyork.com)

The Susquehanna Chapter met November 30 to December 1, 2009, with over 40 members and guests in attendance at Sacred Heart Convent, Danville, Pa. Amy Schiffrin, STS, was our teaching theologian on "The Structure of Eucharistic Prayers." Patrick Rooney, STS, was elected dean. Rod Ronnenberg, STS, served as our Society visitor.

### Something to Consider

Have you considered having a Society guest visit your congregation? The following congregations have sponsored Society visitors and had them lead a forum and/or preach:

Augustana Lutheran Church, Tonawanda, N.Y., Troy Mulvaine, STS, pastor  
Ascension Lutheran Church, Calgary, Alberta, Glen Johnson, STS, pastor  
Christ Lutheran Church, York, Pa., Paddy Rooney, STS, pastor  
Good Shepherd Lutheran Church, Hernando, Fla., Kenneth Blyth, STS, pastor  
Immanuel Lutheran Church, Delhi, N.Y., John Priest, STS, pastor  
St. Luke Lutheran Church, Colorado Springs, Colo., David Wendel, STS, pastor  
St. Matthew's Lutheran Church, Wilmington, N.C., Samuel Zumwalt, STS, pastor  
St. Paul's Lutheran Church, Egertsville, N.Y., Daniel Hoffman, STS, pastor  
St. Paul's Ev. Lutheran Church, Millersburg, Pa., Mark Hoffman, STS, pastor

Our next retreat will be for one day on Monday, March 15, at St. Paul Lutheran Church, Millersburg, Pa. Pr. Rooney will teach on “Mary, the Mother of Our Lord.” The Stations of the Cross will be prayed at the end of the day.

On May 3–4 the chapter will join with the Passavant Chapter and the Delaware River Chapter for a joint retreat at which Dr. Robert Benne will be our teaching theologian.

#### UPSTATE NEW YORK CHAPTER

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

The retreats for the Upstate New York Chapter for 2010 have been scheduled: April 22–23, August 12–13, December 2–3, all at Stella Maris Retreat Center at Skaneateles, N.Y.

#### WISCONSIN CHAPTER

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

The Wisconsin Chapter is living out the inter-Lutheran essence of the Society with 11 retreatants at the last chapter retreat, representing the ELCA, ELPC (Evangelical Lutheran Protestant Church), LCMS, and WELS (Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod). In the Society we are learning that these labels are secondary to our lives of common prayer, study, and mutual consolation. The chapter met at St. Anthony’s Retreat House in Marathon, Wis. Ken Lahners, STS, was chaplain, and Bonny Kinnunen, STS, was preacher.

The next chapter retreat will be at St. Norbert’s Abbey, May 17–18.

### From the Vicar

Pondering the chaos that shoots through the various Lutheran church structures to which we belong (ask yourself, for example, which got the most attention on 14 February among our people—our Lord’s Transfiguration or Valentine’s Day?), our thinking as the Lord’s baptized and ordained people gets focused more sharply (at least, that is one’s hope!).

While we desire to pierce that chaos and roll it back, the reality is that these struggles between the world’s life and the Trinity’s Life are playing themselves out. These chaotic conditions did not just surface, they have been building for years prior to this current year. One recalls a book by Oscar Feucht in the mid-1950s, *Everyone a Minister*, and the one by Malcolm Boyd in the 1960s, *Are You Running With Me, Jesus?* These two books, along with many others that we have read, signal the decline in our understanding of the church’s ministry, as well as the shift to have the Trinity’s Life pressed under our own.

These conditions tempt us to quick and dramatic resolutions, put together, naturally, by our creativity and energy. Such resolutions are often driven by long-running prayers for relief from the chaos, prayers to which there is no apparent response. We need to recognize, though, that these pushes for resolution stem from the attitude given us because of our birth into the world. That life is always pushing us to make something happen. That life even has the nerve to suggest how we can dress the resolutions out so they look like the Trinity’s Life!

The tougher, but redeeming, reality is that because of our Baptisms into the Holy Trinity, our primary task is to wait on the Lord God to pierce this chaos and rescue us from it. This

does not make us passive, letting our life and work in the church’s ministry get pushed around by the chaotic conditions. Rather it stirs us to activity, the activity that works under our obedience to the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Such activity assures us that the Trinity’s Life holds us steady even if the Lord moves us from one structure or parish community to another. The key in such movement is that it occurs not just for the self, but, more importantly, for the Lord who has drawn us into his Life. These chaotic conditions also remind us that the Trinity’s Life is the only, real one existing in this world.

Thankfully, the Lord God has brought us into another season of Lent. These six weeks are filled with familiarity and intensity. They pull us back into the Son’s forty days in the wilderness, the Hebrew people’s forty years in the wilderness, and the years that run between our baptismal and death dates. The weeks remind us that, in spite of the chaos, we are in the church’s ministry to proclaim, serve, and teach the Lord’s Life.

Lent draws us back to our Baptism, the most important day of one’s life. When being confronted by fierce circumstances in Lutheran structures and parish communities, there is great strength in being reminded that we have been marked as the sons and daughters of the Lord God. This mark cannot be taken from us regardless of the pressures and anxieties tumbling out of such circumstances.

The baptismal mark leads us to the Lord’s Word and the Son’s Cross. Those are the only realities that can pierce the chaos surrounding us. It is a gift in this Society that we can pray and study under these chaotic conditions. It is a gift that we can converse with one another about the Word and the Cross, the only realities that continually break down the instinctive drives we have for ourselves. In such hidden ways we are being freed to be obedient to the Holy Trinity and to proclaim the world’s salvation.

Carl A. Voges, STS, Vicar

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