DE TRINITATE

Newsletter of the Society of the Holy Trinity

Societas Trinitatis Sanctae

Volume 13, Number 4, Christ the King 2010

From the Senior

REVISITING THE GENERAL RETREAT

By all accounts we had a wonderful general retreat. It was one of the highest attended general retreats in the history of our Society. Twenty new members subscribed to the Rule. There was a more relaxed and joyful spirit than has been present in recent years. The worship was, as always, well led—thanks to our chaplain, Brad Everett, STS, with assistance from Bill Wilson, STS, as accompanist, Steven Tibbetts, STS, as sacristan, and David Wendel, STS, whose parish secretary formatted and reproduced the worship bulletins. There were the usual complaints about pastors leading (or misleading) from the pews and singing the psalms too boisterously. We really do need to teach pastors to follow printed directions. On the singing of psalms, I suspect that 200 enthusiastic people in a tightly packed room makes it difficult to control the volume.

Richard O. Johnson, STS, acquitted himself admirably as a teaching theologian, with a solid academic paper on Lutheran polity. I was intrigued with the idea of teaching church polity as a theological topic, as Charles Porterfield Krauth did, according to Johnson’s paper. It was a joy to be able to interact with a world class theologian like Dr. Carl E. Braaten. I know Dr. Braaten was touched by the warm welcome he was given. I could sense the awed hush in the room in the evening session of Braaten reminiscences when he described his assessment of the pastor’s work in the light of his own parish experience. The full texts of the papers presented, including my own address to the Society on our ecumenical commitments, are posted on the STS Web site.

Above all, I want to thank our secretary, John Priest, STS, for his management of the general retreat. He puts in as many hours as anyone in preparing for the general retreat: collecting reservations, making contact with the conference center staff, assigning rooms, and making our stay at St. Mary’s as smooth as possible.

My proposal that the Society receive papal teaching into our own magisterium as a way of advancing Chapter VIII, section 4, of our Rule seemed to be enthusiastically embraced. I know that a few members have some misgivings about my proposal. These concerns should be expressed in the course of study and conversation in chapter retreats and respectfully heard. The deans will report at the Leadership Council in February how the senior’s proposal is being received. We may come up with a more systematic way of engaging in a Society-wide emphasis, if that seems like a desirable way to proceed. There were several suggestions that we take up this proposal as the focus of the 2011 general retreat, including Roman Catholic speakers.

RITUAL NOTES

Many members of the Society expressed their appreciation for my “ritual notes” in the last issue of De Trinitate and encouraged me to continue providing them. Okay, herewith . . .

First, to follow up on the last issue: the prayer of the day from the previous Sunday should be used where called for in the daily offices. (Vespers in Lutheran Book of Worship doesn’t call for one.) We have inherited from the Anglicans a tendency to heap collect upon collect at the end of prayer offices. Many of the historic Lutheran versions of the offices, following the chaste Benedictine model, provide for only one or two prayers at the end of Matins and Vespers: the prayer of the day and the collect for grace at Matins and the collect for peace at Vespers. I like returning to this model of limited prayer. The Litany in LBW Vespers covers all the bases and other intercessions can be included in the Eucharist.

Second, it was pointed out to me that the Manual on the Liturgy suggests that the daily lectionary could serve as the source of readings for a daily Eucharist. This is true of the Manual (which is not an official book), but there is no corresponding rubric governing that use in the LBW Leaders (Altar) Edition. I am convinced that the two-year daily lectionary in LBW is strictly intended for the daily prayer offices. The Roman lectionary does provide readings for daily Masses. Perhaps that can provide a better option for those who don’t want to repeat the Sunday readings at daily Eucharists.

Third, I received a request to discuss what might properly be omitted from the full Service of Holy Communion for weekday celebrations. In the Roman/Western tradition the Gloria in excelsis is the Sunday canticle and is not sung on a weekday. The LBW canticle, “This is the feast,” might be sung as a canticle of praise on a saint’s day. The Creed also belongs to the Sunday liturgy and may be omitted on a non-festival weekday. Obviously hymns and songs are omitted at a spoken liturgy, but Lutherans would surely want to have some singing if it is at all possible. Some songs cover action, such as preparing the altar or gathering around the altar for the reception of Holy Communion.

The bare minimum order would include: greeting, prayer of the day, gospel, homily, intercessions, greeting of peace, setting the table, great thanksgiving, the Lord’s Prayer,
administration of Holy Communion, post-communion prayer, and dismissal. I think it is desirable to include a lesson before the gospel, which should be from the Old Testament. This would be followed by an alleluia verse responding to the reading (with a psalm or other Scripture verse) and heralding the gospel (the alleluia). For texts see the Minister’s Edition. I also find it ritually desirable to sing a song while the elements are prepared (an offertory) and while coming forward to receive the sacramental signs (e.g., Agnus Dei). If singing is possible, Lutherans would surely want to sing a hymn of the day.

If there are other ritual issues you would like me to address, send your suggestions to senior@societyholytrinity.org.

Frank C. Senn, STS, Senior

Report of the Secretary

The Society of the Holy Trinity met in general retreat October 19 to October 21, 2010, at the Conference Center of the University of St. Mary of the Lake in Mundelein, Ill. In attendance were 198 members and friends of the Society from across the United States and Canada.

Seven deans, elected by their chapters during the past year, were installed: David A. Aanonson, dean of the Iowa Chapter; Kevin E. Anderson, dean of the Passavant Chapter; Bradley Everett, dean of the Rocky Mountain/Canada Chapter; Luther M. Mathsen, dean of the Minnesota Chapter; Ralph W. Reitmeyer, dean of the Guadalupe River Chapter; David M. Wendel, dean of the Sangre de Cristo Chapter; and Jeff S. Zell, dean of the Indiana Chapter.

Twenty pastors subscribed to the Rule of the Society:

- William George Beck, Passavant Chapter
- Bernard Augustus Christ, Guadalupe River Chapter
- Thomas Steward Church, Florida Chapter
- James Henry Fladland, Susquehanna Chapter
- Wesley Randall Frye, Carolinas Chapter
- Robert John Heinlein, Southern Ohio Chapter
- James H. Houck, Carolinas Chapter
- David Edward Klappenbach, Northern Ohio Chapter
- Mark David Luttio, Florida Chapter
- Judson Frick Merrill, Carolinas Chapter
- Brian Christopher Miller, Passavant Chapter
- Patrick Eugene Pierce, Wisconsin Chapter
- James Arnold Scherer, Northern Illinois Chapter
- D. Gary Schreckengost, Northern Ohio Chapter
- Paul Arne Schultz, Southern Ohio Chapter
- Paul James Schweinler, Florida Chapter
- Christopher Luke Seamon, Sangre de Cristo Chapter
- C. Jason Sigmon, Carolinas Chapter
- Thomas Stellhorn, Susquehanna Chapter
- Nathan Howard Yoder, 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 the 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., September 27–29, 2011.

John E. Priest, STS, Secretary

The Investment Committee

Through the generosity of our members and other benefactors, we have, over the last few years, been able to build an Endowment Fund that we hope will sustain the Society and its work into God’s future.

In order to maximize the benefits of the Endowment Fund, the Leadership Council at its meeting in February 2010 voted to place the funds in an investment program to be managed by Wilbur National Bank, with Adam Niebanck as our Trust Investment Officer. I was charged to handle those matters on behalf of the Society.

In March 2010 we made an initial deposit of $136,071.72. We have chosen a mix of equity/fixed asset allocation in a 60/40 split. It is hoped that this will give us sound and solid return without too much risk. Our stocks are all solid and we have diversified the overall portfolio to minimize any significant loss in one area.

The market has remained volatile since that point, although recent trends are looking more positive. We did have a few losses early on but made some adjustments and things are now looking better overall. We are shooting for a 2 percent average return on our investment and we are more than on track to achieve that this year.

Our last report for the quarter ending September 2010 reflected a dividend and interest payment of $643 and gains in assets of $7,175. Our overall yield is now expected to be 2.01 percent for the year.

Our ending market value on September 30, 2010, is $140,404.61.

Paddy Rooney, STS, Chair
Investment Committee
The Seminarian Support Fund

Our Seminarian Support Fund has continued to receive donations during the year and for that we are most grateful.

Each year we distribute funds to students whose names come to us via the chapter deans. This year we had five students whose names were nominated by four deans. They represented a wide array of folks from the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada, and the Lutheran Church-Canada. The students are in five different seminaries in the U.S. and Canada.

After consideration each student was given the sum of $3,000, and checks were sent to them with a letter at the beginning of April.

In addition, some seminarians participated in a joint chapter retreat (Susquehanna, Passavant, Chesapeake-Potomac) in May with Bob Benne as leader. With the action at the last Leadership Council, $500 from our fund was allocated to assist these chapters with the cost of supporting the seminarians for this event.

It is my hope that in the future we will solicit the names of students over the summer with the intention of getting funds to them by September of each year.

Paddy Rooney, STS, Chair
Seminarian Support Fund

Chapter News

CALIFORNIA CHAPTER
Dean, Richard O. Johnson, roj@nccn.net

The California Chapter welcomed the Sangre de Cristo Chapter in a joint retreat at St. Andrew’s Abbey, Valyermo, Calif., in May. Fr. Alexei Smith, ecumenical officer of the Archdiocese of Los Angeles, led in discussion of the current ecumenical scene.

The chapter will next gather for a silent Advent retreat November 29–30 at Christ the King Retreat Center in Citrus Heights, Calif.; an initial silent retreat last Advent was very much appreciated, and the group agreed to do it again this Advent. The silence will be broken only by joining in praying the offices.

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

The Florida Chapter was blessed with three subscribers to the Rule this year.

Consider combining pleasure with pleasure: Plan an Orlando family vacation and attend a Florida Chapter retreat; your family is unlikely to miss you for 24 hours! If you are age 55-plus, you might combine a retreat with a “Villages” experience. Dates and teaching theologians are on the Florida Web site at http://stsflorida.blogspot.com/ and are listed through February 2012. Our next retreat is December 6–7 with the Rev. Dr. Jonathan Linman as our teaching theologian.

GREAT RIVERS CHAPTER
Dean, Timothy D. Hubert, ptitim2000@yahoo.com

It felt like going home when the Great Rivers Chapter met at Toddhall Retreat and Conference Center, Columbia, Ill., September 19–21 for a 40-hour retreat. We have met here for all but a couple of our retreats since we formed a chapter about seven years go. Mel Blobaum, STS, gave a presentation on the History of the Formation of the American Lutheran Church, and Jim Lehmann, STS, on Christian Burial. Jeff Cottingham, STS, was our chaplain. Ten of our members were present.

Our next retreat is scheduled for January 10–11, 2011, again at the Toddhall Retreat Center. Bill Callister, STS, is scheduled to be our presenter and John Schmeling, STS, will be our chaplain.

GUADALUPE RIVER CHAPTER
Dean, Ralph W. Reitmeyer, rwreit@aol.com

The Guadalupe River Chapter welcomes Tim Christ, STS, who subscribed to the Rule at the 2010 general retreat.

The chapter held its fall retreat on November 15–16 at the Cedarbreak Retreat Center near Belton, Tex. Our dean served as teaching theologian, bringing an introduction to the Ignatian Spiritual Exercises for Lutherans that he had prepared as a part of his work toward being a Spiritual Director. Our chaplain for this retreat was Janice Campbell, STS, and our preacher at the celebration of the Holy Eucharist was the Rev. Douglass Scholles.

NORTHERN ILLINOIS CHAPTER
Dean, Keith L. Forni, kforni@aol.com

The Northern Illinois Chapter rejoiced in welcoming the Society to its region again for the annual general retreat last month.

The chapter recently adopted the Portiuncula Center for Prayer in Frankfort, Ill. (in the south suburban Chicago area), as its retreat home. At their next overnight retreat there, February 7–8, 2011, Jim Scherer, STS, will give a presentation on our Lord’s Great Commission and lead a discussion on the global challenges and opportunities for ecumenical Christian evangelization.

An additional chapter retreat is planned at the Portiuncula Center for May 12–13, 2011.

SANGRE DE CRISTO CHAPTER
Dean, David M. Wendel, pr-wendel@saintlukes-cs.org

The Sangre de Cristo Chapter will be meeting for an early Advent retreat December 6–7, at the St. Fidelias Retreat Center, Victoria, Kans. Many may be familiar with the location because of the Cathedral of the Plains, which may be seen for miles when traveling I-70 through western Kansas. The retreat will focus on the Eucharist and sacrifice, using Gustaf Aulen’s book, Eucharist and Sacrifice, and Pope Benedict XVI’s apostolic exhortation Sacramentum Caritatis, on the Eucharist as the source and summit of the Church’s life and mission. To register for the retreat, send a message to Dean Wendel, STS, at the e-mail address above.

SUSQUEHANNA CHAPTER
Dean, Patrick Rooney, pastorrooney@christlutheranyork.com

At our general chapter retreat the Susquehanna Chapter of the Society was blessed to have two new pastors
sign the Rule. That brings our total to 29 members in the chapter.

Our Advent retreat will be held November 29–30 at Convent of the Sacred Heart in Danville, Pa. Our teaching theologian will be Canon Dr. Peter Sills from Sussex, England, who will address the topic of “Insights from the Benedictine Tradition for Modern Christian Leaders.” All are welcome.

WISCONSIN CHAPTER

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

The Wisconsin Chapter is pleased to welcome Pat Pierce, STS, as its newest member. Pastor Pierce signed the Rule at the general retreat this past October. All chapter members at the general retreat were richly fed during the time of retreat.

The chapter will be gathering in retreat on December 6–7 at St. Norbert’s Abbey, DePere Wis. We will begin charting a course for reading and discussing the papal encyclicals, as discussed at the general retreat.

The chapter is greatly honored that a book on J. K. Wilhelm Lohe will be coming out shortly from Concordia Publishing House, St. Louis. Chapter member Wolf D. Knappe, STS, has translated the Lohe biography by Erika Geiger.

From the Vicar

Pulling away from the general retreat last month and resuming the church’s ministry in the places to which we have been called, one is struck, year after year, by the ways in which these retreats give us glimpses of the eternal realities of the Lord’s Life. Such glimpses strengthen and sustain us as we carry out the ministry into which our Lord has drawn us. And the source of those glimpses? The instinctive response given us by the world’s life says that it is imbedded in the highly gifted teachers, the skillful preachers and presiders, and the intense work of the Leadership Retreat. It is intriguing (and redeeming) to look at the response given us by the Lord at Baptism.

The same people and the same gifts are involved, but Baptism exposes us to what is undergirding their work and making it possible—they have been rescued from the world’s life and now are immersed in the Holy Trinity’s Life. They (and we) have been and are continually broken down and restored by the Lord’s Word. This is a daily activity of the Lord God that runs on into eternity. Such activity gets focused sharply and intensely when we gather in the general retreat (as well as the chapter retreats) because it is there that the Lord’s Scriptures and Sacraments are dominating our lives.

These glimpses of the Lord’s Life are his gift to us. They don’t appear because we have scheduled them on our calendar (his sense of time is always different from our own). They don’t appear because we are worthy of them (the reality is that we can never be worthy enough to cause him to reward us). But they are given to remind us of who we are as we exercise the church’s ministry. They do strengthen and sustain us in the strains and tensions of such ministry.

Using a “disciplined imagination” (Bruce Metzger), one can see the Lord’s Word coming to us from the holy city, Jerusalem. In Revelation 21, John describes the dimensions of that city. They are staggering: 1,500 miles high, wide, and deep! Imagining that city within the confines of North America is overwhelming (one could fly from Columbia to Montreal and still be in the city limits!).

That Word steadily makes its way into the lives of the world’s people through the Lord’s Scriptures and Sacraments, tracing them with the Son’s Cross at Baptism. This Word also prepares, ordains, and calls such new people to serve as pastors in the church’s ministry, reflecting and carrying the Lord’s Life to all those who surround us.

Such surroundings not only include the Lutheran church structures to which we belong, but also those involving the Orthodox, Roman, Anglican, and Protestant churches with whom we may have contact. While the difficulties of this generation tempt us to withdraw exclusively into the Society, we are aware that such temptation is destructive and deadly. One suspects that the Lord’s Spirit could have caused this Society to emerge so there could be a renewed understanding of the Trinity’s Life. That understanding can be unpacked in the presence of those who are trying to freeze the Lord’s Word into sectarian and legalistic categories, to those who are trying to go beyond the Lord’s Word, and to those who ignore the Lord’s Word, fully absorbed with their gods of pleasure and profit, person and power.

Thus, as we travel from retreat to parish and back again, we can be confident that our Lord will steadily give us glimpses of the eternal realities of his Life, while keeping us faithfully and honestly immersed in that Life.

Carl A. Voges, STS, Vicar

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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