DE TRINITATE

Newsletter of the Society of the Holy Trinity

Societas Trinitatis Sanctae

Volume 18, Number 2 After Pentecost 2015

From the Senior

I expect this to be my last newsletter column. I have had a column in every issue of De Trinitate since its inception, either as vicar or as senior---nearly 18 years of reflections on our life together in the Society. I consider writing newsletter articles to be a very important activity because the newsletter reaches our widest audience including ALL members of our Society. It's an opportunity to announce and sometimes clarify and always to reflect on what is happening in our Society. I have long since learned that the members of STS are a bunch of free-thinkers. You are not easily herded and you all have your own opinions on issues. But the other officers and I do have a perspective on the whole Society and that's what we try to share in these pages.

My perspective is that it's time for the Society to tap into its remarkable membership to elect a new leader. We are not lacking in competent members and I think we could use some fresh energy and new ideas. This time of relative calm in the Society allows for a transition in the overall administration of the Society. We have become a sizeable organization but we still rely on "volunteer" leadership to manage our life together across a wide geography. We have made considerable strides forward in shoring up this management through the diligent attention to details by our secretary, Patrick Rooney, STS and our bursar, David Aanonson, STS. But preventing a descent into chaos requires "discipline in the ranks." Deans and members of chapters need to cooperate with procedures that are established or agreed to by the Leadership Council.

As Senior for nearly 12 years I have steered the Society through a series of crises: among them, the exodus of a number of original members into the Roman Catholic Church; the sexuality issues coming to a head in church assemblies in 2006 and 2009; schism in our Church bodies and the formation of new Lutheran denominations. I have tried to keep the Society oriented toward its original vision of renewing the ordained ministry of the Lutheran Churches and supporting its members through all the changes in church and society swirling around us. Probably the thing that I have most tried to do is to constantly remind the members that we are a pan-Lutheran organization. That was a lot harder when we were an overwhelmingly ELCA group. That is no longer the case. But the diversity of Lutheran denominations represented in our membership, with their differing procedures and confessional commitments, presents a new challenge.

The Rule of the Society of the Holy Trinity was drafted by a committee of six: Bishop Michael McDaniel (of blessed memory), Louis Smith (of blessed memory), Ronald Bagnall, Philip Max Johnson, Larry Yoder, and myself. Our work was further honed by the 22 others who signed it at the first general retreat at Loyola House in Morristown, NJ. I think the Rule set a high bar for all of us and we've had to say that we're "growing into it." (I suspect that's the case with the rules of all religious orders.) But we've also discerned over the years that many members who come into the Society have no experience of such items in the Rule as praying the daily prayer offices, participating in spiritual retreats, engaging in mutual visitation of pastoral colleagues, and practicing Confession and Absolution. These are not practices taught in the seminaries. The Society itself has become a kind of seminary with teaching as a major component of retreats. We envisioned teaching one another, which is an important way to learn, and relying less on outside speakers, unless they are members of the Society from other chapters. I remind us that our Rule states, "In our gatherings for retreat, we will be prepared both to participate in and to lead discussions upon the mysteries of the Faith" (VI, 5). That applies to all members of the Society. All of our members have a theological degree, and our Rule envisions continued learning and teaching by our pastor-members.

I have had numerous opportunities to teach within the Society. But in "retirement" from pastoral ministry I have also had opportunities to teach in seminaries, universities, and congregations in the U.S. and in other countries. I will be teaching this summer at the Hartwick Seminary Institute of Theology at Hartwick College, in January at Trinity School of Ministry/North American Lutheran Seminary, and in the spring term 2016 at Garrett-Evangelical Theological Seminary in Evanston. I also continue to have writing projects. I am surrendering the office of Senior also to devote myself to this teaching ministry as long as I have invitations and am able to accept them.

I want to conclude by recognizing the Vicar of the Society, Carl Voges, STS. I appointed Carl after Lou Smith's untimely death only months into his service as Vicar in my first term as Senior. I thought having someone from LCMS and in a different geographic region than myself was important. But I had also been impressed by Carl's pastoral maturity and wisdom when I met him at early retreats. He has been brimming with ideas and insights about the Society and I have come to rely on him for his guidance and energy. He has been good for me and for the Society. The Senior also appoints the Secretary and we have been well served by John

Priest, STS and Patrick Rooney, STS with their administrative skills and no-nonsense approach to getting others to pay attention to details. The bursars are elected by the Society, but I thank Mark Hoffman, STS and David Aanonson, STS for serving along with me. And finally thanks to all of you for your prayers and support over these years. I will continue to pray the Society as it continues on its uncommon way under the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

Yours in Christ,
Frank C. Senn, STS, Senior

General Retreat

The 2015 General Retreat of the Society of the Holy Trinity will be held at St. Mary of the Lake University Conference Center in Mundelein, IL September 22-24. The Chaplain will be Rev. Steven Saxe, STS, Pastor of Good Shepherd Lutheran Church in Greenville, SC and Dean of the Carolinas Chapter. Our theme will be "Deliverance from the Power of the Devil." Teaching theologians will be Rev. Carl Roemer, STS, of Williamsburg, VA, on "Exorcism in the Ministry of Jesus in the Gospel of Mark;" Father Paul Turner, Pastor of St. Anthony Roman Catholic Parish in Kansas City, MO, and former president of the North American Academy of Liturgy, on "Exorcism in the Rites of Christian Initiation;" and Rev. Philip Gagnon, STS, Pastor of St. Albert Evangelical Lutheran Church in St. Albert, Alberta, Canada, on "Exorcism in Pastoral Ministry."

This General Retreat will also include the Ecclesiastical Ballot for the election of a Senior. Times for balloting will be spread throughout the schedule of the Retreat. The Rev. Rod Ronneberg, STS, will serve as the officiant for the Ecclesiastical Ballot. The Ecclesiastical Ballot, as practiced by our Society, is a liturgical order that includes a hymn, Scripture reading, and prayer. Dean Keith Forni, STS, has volunteered the members of the Northern Illinois Chapter to serve as tellers. The Bursar is elected by majority vote during the general chapter meeting.

The Leadership Council suggested that the retreat begin with the Service of Holy Communion rather than conclude with it since a number of members have had to leave before the close of the retreat. The Senior has made this change to the schedule. It may actually prove easier to begin with the Eucharist since there is time to prepare for it. We will conclude the retreat with a Service of the Word and the installation of the Senior and Bursar.

Registration for members in chapters is to be done through their deans. At-Large members are to contact the Secretary directly at pastorrooney@gmail.com. Guests should also contact the Secretary directly. The cost for a guest is $200.

Some folks choose to come in early on Monday. Registrations for early arrival should be made through the Secretary. The cost is $60 for the overnight; $12 for supper on Monday and $8 for breakfast on Tuesday. Checks for early arrivals should be made payable to the Society and mailed to the Secretary BEFORE the retreat.

A letter with details of the retreat is attached to this newsletter.

Seminarian Support

Once again it is time to nominate Seminarians for our annual scholarships. Each year the Society has, through the generous contribution of individuals and congregations, been able to give scholarships to a number of seminarians throughout the Church. This year the pool of funds is somewhat less but it is still our hope that we will be able to provide assistance to a number of well- deserving students who are mindful of the aims of the Society and supportive of our work. If you know of Seminarians who may benefit from such a scholarship, please contact the local chapter dean or the Secretary of the Society directly.

Paddy Rooney, STS, Secretary.

Chapter News

CAROLINAS CHAPTER
Dean, Steven Saxe, LGCS1601@aol.com

The Carolinas Chapter Pentecost Retreat was held at the Catholic Conference Center, Hickory SC, June 1-2. Twenty-eight people attended, including 16 members of the Chapter, one student Inquirer from the Lutheran House of Studies at Gordon Conwell Seminary, two clergy Inquirers, and nine area laity. The retreat began with Eucharist, Rev. Judson Merrell, STS, presiding. Three Study sessions featured teaching theologian Dr. Mary Havens from the Gordon Conwell Lutheran House of Studies; her lively presentation on "Martin Luther and The Devil" was well received. Rev. Pierson Shaw, STS, served as Confessor and Retreat Chaplain, and presided at the Daily Offices. Monday night Compline was sung at the home of Dr. Larry Yoder, with a splendid repast afterwards prepared and served by Marianne Yoder. The Chapter Committee was convened by the Dean over lunch on Tuesday. The Chapter meeting was held before the closing Office, concluding the retreat.

The Chapter's Advent Retreat will be held November 30-December 1, at the Catholic Conference Center in Hickory. The topic for study will be: pastoral issues concerning same-sex marriage. Rev. Sam Zumwalt,STS, will serve as retreat Chaplain and Confessor.

COLUMBIA RIVER CHAPTER
Dean, Joseph Hughes, j_w_hughes@hotmail.com

The Columbia River Chapter of the Society of the Holy Trinity was formed on April 8, 2015 at Mount Angel Abbey, Mt. Angel, Oregon, near Portland. Nineteen pastors and friends of the Society attended the first Day of Theological Reflection and Inquiry. Rev. Dr. Frank Senn, STS, Senior, served as teaching theologian. After Matins, he offered a presentation about the Society of the Holy Trinity and responded to questions from the group. He then officiated at a brief liturgy to officially form the new chapter, which was possible since three of those present had subscribed to The Rule: Rev. Joseph Hughes, Rev. Joel Nickel, and Rev. Arthur (Butch) Olsen. Pr. Hughes was elected Dean.

The group worshipped with the monks of the abbey for noon and vespers prayer offices, and Abbot, Gregory Duerr, OSB, shared supper and conversation with the participants in

the abbey guesthouse. Several participants expressed their interest in subscribing to the Rule at the upcoming General Retreat.

Following up on themes suggested by the Senior at the initial day of theological reflection and inquiry, a second day of theological reflection was offered at Immanuel Lutheran Church, Silverton, Oregon on May 21, 2015 under the theme "Pastoral Practice as Pilgrimage." Thirteen participants gathered for the day. Rev. Leah Stolte Doerfler, pastor of Immanuel served as teaching theologian and presented reflections on her recent pilgrimage to El Camino de Santiago de Compostela. Rev. Butch Olsen served as chaplain and led opening worship. Rev. Joel Nickel led a "mini pilgrimage" on the theme, "The Way of the Resurrection," around the nave of Immanuel to close the day, using his original art. Those interested in viewing or obtaining Joel's art, which was featured at the 2014 General Retreat, are invited to contact him at nickel2432@comcast.net.

The Fall Chapter Retreat of the Columbia River Chapter has been schedule for Wednesday & Thursday, November 4-5, 2015 at Mount Angel Abbey Guesthouse.

DELAWARE RIVER CHAPTER
Dean, Jeremiah Sassaman, revsassaman@ptd.net

On June 8-9 the Delaware River Chapter met at St. Francis Retreat Center in Easton, PA for a fascinating presentation by Rev. John Kline, STS, on his experiences in Israel in the 1970's. Pr. Kline and his son spent time on an archaeological dig, finding fascinating history under their feet. Our Chapter will meet again in retreat November 9-10, at St. Francis Retreat Center, to hear Rev. Patrick Rooney, STS, present on Mary, Mother of our Lord.

GREAT RIVERS CHAPTER
Dean, Jim Lehmanm, jtl611@hotmail.com

The Great Rivers Chapter once again met at Todd Hall Retreat Center at Columbia, IL. Eight of our members gathered on May 11-12 to study and pray together. Rev. Ron Rasmus, STS, gave a presentation on generational changes in our society. By better understanding these changes, we are better able to communicate the unchangeable Gospel. Rev. Steven Tibbetts, STS, led us in prayer as chaplain. Our next retreat will be October 26-27.

GUADALUPE CHAPTER
Dean, Ralph Reitmeyer, RWReit@aol.com

The Chapter met in retreat on May 11-12. Our teaching theologians were Rev. Dr. Douglas Schoelles, Rev. Jared Stillions, STS, and Rev. John Scheusner, who brought a presentation entitled "Planning a Year of Lectionary Preaching." Our chaplain for this retreat was Rev Janice Campbell-Unger, STS, and Pr. Schoelles brought a word of proclamation during our celebration of the Holy Eucharist.

Rev. Patrick J. Rooney, STS, Secretary, will serve as teaching theologian at the Chapter's next retreat, November 16-17.

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

The Chapter gathered for its annual summer picnic and concert June 26 at Chicago's Grant Park Music Festival for a program that included the "Reformation Symphony" by Felix Mendelssohn. As rain dampened the turnout, an additional summer concert night will be selected.

The Chapter, along with the Indiana Kentucky Chapter, will hold an All Saints Retreat at the Portiuncula Center for Prayer, Frankfort IL, November 2-3, 2015. Rev. Patrick Rooney, STS, will serve as teaching theologian on "Mary, Mother of Our Lord." At that time, an election for Dean of the N. Illinois Chapter will be conducted, as the current three-year term will be concluding.

WISCONSIN CHAPTER
Dean, Timothy Duesenburg, stmaximos@aol.com

The Wisconsin Chapter met in retreat on February 2-3 on the occasion of the Presentation of our Lord at St. Norbert's Abbey in De Pere, Wisconsin. We met again in retreat on May 18-19, again at the Abbey. Rev. Mark Knappe served as the chaplain at our May retreat, and Rev. Craig Nehring preached at our celebration of the Eucharist. For our study time we read together the first couple of chapters of Rev. Phillip Gagnon's "Deliver Us from Evil" as a way to focus on the upcoming topic for our teaching time at the General Retreat.

The chapter will meet again in retreat at St. Norbert's Abbey on November 9-10. The Chapter's Bursar, Rev. Mark Knappe, STS, will keep up the annual tradition of hosting a cookout on the last Friday of June, this year on the 26th. The informal gathering will begin with the praying of Vespers at 5:30pm.

From the Vicar

Participating in chapter retreats this year has been a heartening experience. One is reminded of the giftedness of the Society's members and visitors while exhibiting a high faithfulness to their ordination promises. One is also reminded of the anxieties and difficulties that surround our exercise of the Church's ministry. But, as we pull away from those retreats, we are brimming with the realities of having been plunged into the Holy Trinity's Life, the plunges that strengthen and sustain us.

All of the comes together as we prepare for the General Retreat this coming September. We will be stepping off into the Society's eighteenth year! This is a remarkable event when we consider this order's origins. Admittedly we were drawn to it because our life and work in the Church's ministry had become quite disheveled (inwardly and outwardly). As we look over the history of the first seventeen years, it is increasingly clear that the Lord has used them to unpack the realities of the ministry to which he called and ordained us while making us more alert and stronger in its practice.

The Rule, that brought together the thinking of the Society's formative years, still undergirds everything we do. It serves to keep us immersed in the Trinity's Life, but this immersion does not occur early. It cuts against the attitude

and actions given us at birth so it is not a natural or instinctive process. Thus, there is a great deal of work involved when one subscribes to the Rule and exercises it. It, in fact, reflects the work that goes on in the parishes where we serve. Such work, though, is driven by the actions of the Lord God and gives us a redeeming stubbornness so that we persist in it.

There truly is no question that participation in the Society's life makes a significant difference in the Lutheran-Catholic practice of the Church's ministry. This does not mean that we are better or more gifted than other pastors, but it does mean that we are more fully exposed to the mysterious workings of the Lord's Word. Such exposure is fierce and frightening because it crushes the life given us by birth.

In these years together, we have learned that this rough exposure breaks the grip clamped on us by the unholy trio of sin, death and Satan. Such exposure enables the Church to be renewed in each generation. One of our sainted members, Michael McDaniel, was very eloquent in reminding us how such renewal begins with the pastors who let themselves be exposed to the workings of the Word.

At the General Retreat we will complete the three-year emphasis on sin, death and Satan by focusing on the prince of evil. We will have the opportunity to take part in Confession and Absolution on Wednesday afternoon. There will be six confessors to guide us through this restoring sacrament.

Throughout the Retreat we will participate in a pure ecclesiastical ballot as we prayerfully and thoughtfully seek a new Senior for the Society. This will be the seventh time for this ballot. It is a distinctive characteristic of the Society's life because it is remarkably different from the ballots we are accustomed to in the various Lutheran church structures. The Society's ballot is designed to avoid the "politicking" that is imbedded in the various levels of government and gets reflected in the usual Lutheran practices. Every member of the Society is eligible to serve and the balloting is shaped by the workings of the Holy Spirit. This work is mysterious because it steers us from those who desire the office to those who resist it. This ballot goes against the habits we have accumulated in our own church bodies, but it is a much better one, one that faithfully reflects the Life of the Triune God.

As we make our way to Mundelein, IL, in September, we will be mindful of the realities that swirl around the practice of the Church's ministry. First, life in the Lutheran church structures appears to be calmer, but there are multiple reasons for that appearance. Arching over that life is the uneasy practice of turning in on one's self or parish or church to make that life more manageable. We have learned enough in these years to realize that such turning in is exactly the wrong move. Turns are called for, but the only redeeming one is the one to the Lord God. This turn is the most difficult, but it frees us from the uneasiness that settles in on the Lord's people when his Life is not dominating theirs.

Second, we are still surrounded by the instinctive drive to re-shape the Lord's Life to fit with our thoughts and actions. Thankfully, our continual exposure to the Lord's Scriptures breaks that drive down and settles us into the Lord's thinking and doing.

Third, we are very much aware of the ideologies running amok through the world's life. It is fascinating, on the one hand, to observe how they capture the mind and the work of so many people, an explosion of narcissism. But it is also dispiriting to see how much of this is trapping people and holding them up with solutions that do not really exist. Still, our task as the Church's pastors is to proclaim, serve and teach the Gospel in the middle of these realities, trusting that the Holy Trinity will cross the lives of people who are disoriented, arrogant and empty. We will leave Mundelein then, confident that what we are called and ordained to do will take place, even if such occurrences are just a glimmer of what the Lord has promised.

Carl A. Voges, STS, Vicar

The 2016 Liturgical Calendar

Members and visitors at the General Retreat in September will be able to pick up the 2016 Lutheran Liturgical Calendar printed by the Ashby Publishing Co., Erie, PA. We recognize that some of you are already familiar with it, but it is thought that it would be good to increase that familiarity. The calendar has been customized for the Society with the Old Testament Trinity as the artwork and a brief description of the Society's life and work. The Rev'd Dr. Philip H. Pfatteicher serves as the editor for the calendar. The calendars are accurate and comprehensive. They work well in parish communities for pastors, musicians, assisting deacons, altar guild members, elders and council members. The cost is $5 each. If you want one mailed to you, the cost is $8. The payments are to be given to the Vicar, Carl A. Voges (checks are to be made out to him).

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Editor: Leslie C. Thayer
Editorial office: 2008 North 10th Street, Terre Haute, IN 47804 / 412-952-8202 / leslie.thayer8@gmail.com

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

Senior: Rev. Frank C. Senn, 1015 Florence Avenue Evanston, Il 60202
847-328-5918 / Fcsenn70@gmail.com

Vicar: Rev. Carl A. Voges, 129 Pond Ridge Road, Columbia, SC 29223 / 803-788-6656 or 803-269-6656 / carl.voges4@icloud.com

Secretary: Rev. Patrick J. Rooney, 450 Ridge Road, Dillsburg, PA 17019
717-870-1154 / pastorrooney@gmail.com

Bursar: Rev. David A. Aanonson, 1913 Farrel Drive, Coralville, IA 52241
319-339-1961 / daanonson@mchsi.com

Society Website: www.societyholytrinity.org