DE TRINITATE

Newsletter of the Society of the Holy Trinity

Societas Trinitatis Sanctae

Volume 19, Number 3 Concluding Ordinary Time 2016

From the Senior

A Pan-Lutheran Ministerium

The words or phrase do not appear in our Rule, nor do they show up in our Founding Statement. But the phrase is commonly used among us…that we are a pan-Lutheran ministerium. But what does that really mean and what implications does it have for our common life together?

We must be clear that we are not the first pan-Lutheran organization or structure in the history of Lutheranism. Indeed, such history is marked from its very beginnings with efforts to reconcile various interpretations and theological positions, often in joint gatherings for the purpose of seeking unity and/or a common goal. From a variety of such theological positions to the establishment of a seemingly vast array of synods, Lutheranism has, throughout its history, both divided itself into various positions and then sought ways to reconcile those same variant positions through joint working groups or, sometimes, even mergers.

But the pan-Lutheran nature of the Society of the Holy Trinity is quite different from those previous efforts, partly because there is not an attempt on our part to smooth over the differences among us nor seek a goal of union betwixt our positions. And while the work of past pan-Lutheran efforts was often to establish a new union between various bodies, our pan-Lutheranism is one committed to living together while recognizing and even celebrating our diversity.

So, let's for the moment, go back to the time of our founding…now some 20 years ago when the face of Lutheranism on the North American continent was very different. The ELCA and the LCMS were, by far, the dominant Lutheran bodies of the day. The Wisconsin Synod and some smaller groups did exist, but the field was dominated by these two larger bodies comprising a total membership in the US and Canada of nearly 10 million members. Yet both these bodies were beset by internal problems which were causing some of their clergy to have questions about their role within their ecclesial structure and the theological positions that were being taken by those same bodies.

And it was these common concerns that brought members of both the ELCA and LCMS together to help found our Society. Now there were obvious differences between these two bodies, some of them not insignificant: the ordination of women, a policy of open or closed communion and the role that Holy Scripture should play in our theological practice.

But it was despite these differences that those who gathered from the early 90's and on, found that they could come together around the wider and greater concerns they had about the orthodoxy and the sacred deposit of the faith which they, as priests and pastors in the One, Holy Church, believed was under attack and that they could not ignore such things but must speak up against it. The pan-Lutheranism of the Society in those early days therefore, was to look past the ecclesial differences partly because they saw that it was not their role to address or resolve these matters but rather look to their unity in prayer, reflection and persistent orthodoxy as those things that would bind them.

Since those early days, the face of Lutheranism in the US and Canada has changed considerably. Instead of basically two major bodies it is reported that today there are now at least 24 recognized Lutheran bodies on the North American continent. And it is not only the number of such bodies that has increased but also the number of issues which have divided us - issues such as ecclesiology, especially the role of bishops/presidents; moral issues, particularly those of human sexuality; and an incipient mushiness, which is destroying the theological integrity and orthodoxy in too many of our ecclesial bodies.

It is in the face of all these issues that the Society has grown to include members from now some 12 different Lutheran bodies. But with this growth in membership and representation we now face even greater differences among us. And while other efforts at a pan-Lutheranism among ecclesial bodies has faltered over the years we now find ourselves as perhaps the only place where such a large number of bodies can be not only represented but also where we can figure out how to live together in a new way which says that which binds us together is greater than that which divides us.

However, as I pointed out in my address to the Society at the start of our General Chapter retreat this past September, this unity does not mean, indeed will never mean, that we agree on all these differences. These differences are real and cannot be whitewashed in some sort of false effort on our part to pretend that they do not exist. Rather our way of living is to acknowledge these differences yet recognize that in our common life of prayer, our gathering in retreats, our mutual visitation and our learning and studying, we are able to find a common bond which is both enduring and complete. This is not, I hasten to add, merely a means by which we will go along just to get along. Rather it is an understanding that our Rule provides that bond and its accompanying accountability, of our life together – the truth which is grounded in Scripture, Creeds and Confessions. This calls for the boldness of proclamation of which I also spoke in my address to the

Society "a ministry that is marked by frankness and openness and the call to serve those to whom the truth is to be proclaimed.

Does that mean that all our living together is wonderful and perfect? Of course not, for the fullness of the Kingdom has not yet come among us. Yet there is a way in which our common living together is able to reflect an image of what that Kingdom could be…a place of mutual respect and understanding; where mutual conversation and consolation is a reality among those serving in Christ's Church; where a stated life together is just that…a togetherness which is strong and which sustains us amidst the difficulties of the life to which we have been called.

Today the Society is one of the few places in Lutheranism where we can celebrate our pan-Lutheran nature because we both understand and appreciate the differences between us while at the same time rejoicing in the unity which binds us. The Rule is not perfect and our membership is comprised of frail and sinful human beings who sometimes indulge that fallen nature in arrogance and a self-righteousness which undermines our life together. But, by and large we have found that the Society is that unique and special place within the life of the Church today where we can indeed, bind up our wounds, be strengthened and sustained in our calling and celebrate our pan-Lutheranism in strong and positive ways.

Over the past year I have spoken in many of our chapters about how we are seeking to move the Society away from that which we are against toward that which makes a more positive case for the Society and our life together. In this way, we are all seeking to redefine our Order and the role it can play within the life of the Church. We hope also that, in this way, we will encourage other individuals to prayerfully consider joining our ranks. That is why I believe that this mark of pan-Lutheranism, which sets us distinctively apart from other expressions of the Church, can be a unique gift which we can, in turn, offer to that same Church. And for that gift and blessing, we can only offer thanks to God.

Patrick J. Rooney, STS, Senior

Report of the Secretary

This is a condensed version of the report delivered to the Society at its general retreat on September 22, 2016.

There has recently been much discussion surrounding the numbers and finances of the Society. I believe it's helpful to see how our membership and attendance numbers break down:

We have 288 subscribed members in 22 chapters in two countries.

10 pastors subscribed to the Rule at the 2016 General Retreat

198 members paid their dues in full this year. Of those,

41 did not attend the General Retreat for various reasons.

7 members asked to waive a portion of their dues

13 members asked to have their 2016 dues waived entirely

70 subscribed members did not pay any of their dues at all, nor made contact concerning them.

This is the first year the data concerning waiving of dues has been tracked, so there is no exact comparison to previous years.

For the 2016 General Retreat, there were 194 total attendees: 156 members, 29 guests, and 9 Seminarians from 3 seminaries. For comparison's sake, there were 217 people registered for last year's General Retreat. 2016 was down 10%, but 2015 was an election year and attendance is always higher in those years. The attendance at the 2016 General retreat is in line with previous non-election year retreats.

Since I was appointed Secretary last October, my primary duties have included setting up bank accounts and transferring funds from previous banks, and working with the Society's accountant and with the Bursar. I've learned the Microsoft Access database used for maintaining membership file, and am learning QuickBooks for online recording and categorizing of deposits. I've also handled all correspondence for the Society, including thank you notes, tax letters and acknowledgements of various kinds. I am working on the transition from paper mailings to email, especially newsletters. This will save the society quite a lot of money in postage and printing costs. Our mailing list has a total of 916 contacts, and when we began to email the newsletter this past spring, we had more than 500 without email. That's been whittled down to 331, mostly due to the efforts of David Hanssen, STS, and Katie Johnson, STS, who helped me track down several hundred correct emails. Of the 288 members of the Society, there are only 7 with no email addresses, so I'm pleased that we'll be able to communicate well with the membership through email. Looking to the future, I'm planning to work with computer professionals to upgrade our database, which is inadequate to our needs. I will continue work with the Society's archivist, David Hanssen, to transfer files both electronic and paper and will revamp and simplify the annual dues information form.

A large part of the job has been the processing of dues payments and registrations for the General Retreat. As Secretary, I handle all deposits, so please remember to send things to me, not the Senior or the Bursar. If you have auto-bill pay, please remember to change the name and address to whom payments are sent. I also intend to set up an electronic payment option before the next round of dues and registrations. Speaking of dues, 2017 dues need to be submitted by Holy Trinity Sunday, June 11, 2017. If your church is sending in your dues, for example, please make sure they add your name on the memo line, or even on a Post-It note. Remember to send all checks to me, and please make everything payable to the Society, not to me personally.

I pray daily for you, my brothers and sisters. Please also hold me in prayer, and pray that God prospers the work of the Society and keeps us faithful to Christ Jesus.

Reverend Pari R. Bailey, STS, Secretary

Chapter News

CAROLINAS CHAPTER

Dean, Steve Saxe, LCGS1601@aol.com

The Chapter was represented at General Retreat by nine members and one lay guest.

Our Advent Retreat will be held November 28-29 at the Catholic Conference Center in Hickory, NC. The topic of study will be *Sola Scripture, Then and Now* as a follow-up on Fr. Stephen Freeman's previous presentation at our Pentecost Retreat, which differentiated the "classical" and "modern" understandings of the Christian Faith in the modern West. Study at future retreats will continue to explore topics affected by the divergence between the modern-progressive and historic-traditional ways of understanding the Faith of the Church as "*the mystery hidden for ages and generations but now revealed to His saints*." Chapter member Reverend David Mielke, STS, will serve as Chaplain and Reverend John Yost, STS, as Confessor. The retreat will conclude following lunch Tuesday afternoon. Monday evening Compline and *Gemuetlichkeit* will be hosted by Dr. Larry (STS) and Marianne Yoder at their home.

CENTRAL PLAINS CHAPTER
Dean, Cathi Braasch, prcihb@gmail.com

The Central Plains Chapter had 12 registrants (four members and eight visitors) for the 2016 Pre-Advent Retreat at St. Benedict Retreat Center, Schuyler NE., November 14-15. Reverend Eric Alm, STS, served as Chaplain and Reverend Matt Bahnfleth, STS, as Confessor. Several Chapter members served as peer teaching theologians on the Gospels and hymns for Advent (A). Upcoming Chapter Retreats include Mid-Winter Virtual Retreat and Peer Visitation (Teaching Topic: *Didache* for Today). *N.B.* – Given unpredictable winter weather here on the Plains, this will be an experimental "retreat-in-place" across the chapter's geography. Participants will form retreat pairs or triads with colleagues who live nearby, meeting for study, individual confession and absolution, meals and mutual encouragement. We'll connect as a Chapter and friends on-line for the prayer offices throughout the day and for discussion of the study topic. Easter Season Retreat—7:00 PM Sunday, May 7 to 12:00 Noon Tuesday, May 9, 2017, at St. Benedict Retreat Center, Schuyler, NE. (Teaching Topic: Worship, Liturgy and Ascetics)

For more information and updates, follow or join the Facebook Group *Society of the Holy Trinity -- Central Plains Chapter* or contact the Chapter Dean, Rev. Dr. Cathi Braasch STS, at prcihb@gmail.com

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

The chapter gathered for its Fall Chapter Retreat on November 2-3 at Mount Angel Abbey in St. Benedict, Oregon near Portland. Dr. Phil Brandt, professor at Concordia University in Portland presented on the theme "Co-Opting Luther on the 500th." Reverend Joel Nickel, STS, well known contemporary Christian artist, offered a presentation, "Visual Arts in the Reformation: Luther and Cranach- Reformation Propaganda?" Members of the chapter shared in leading the prayer offices. Ten guests and inquirers registered for the retreat. This winter, a "Day of Theological Reflection" is planned at Luther House, the Lutheran campus ministry at Oregon State University in Corvallis.

MINNESOTA CHAPTER
Dean, Trevor Bailey, tbail65@gmail.com

Minnesota Chapter looks forward to its Advent Retreat on December 5-6 at Christ the King Retreat Center, Buffalo, MN. The Reverend David Hanssen, STS, will serve as Chaplain, and we will enjoy our annual Advent hymn sing, as well as observe the Feast Day of St. Nicholas. The Reverend Dr. Paul Westermeyer will be the Teaching Theologian, making two presentations: "Church Music Before and After the Reformation" and "Sending and Vocation: What Bach Teaches Us."

NORTHERN ILLINOIS CHAPTER
Dean, Keith Forni, KeithLForni@gmail.com

The Chapter Advent Retreat will be held Friday, December 2, 9:00 am - 3:00 pm at St. Luke Lutheran Church 1500 W. Belmont Avenue, Chicago, with an optional post-retreat visit to the Christkindlmarket on Daley Plaza. To register, contact Dean, Keith Forni via email or 815-600-3030.

SANGRE DE CRISTO CHAPTER
Dean, Peter Jacobson, pjocobson@cox.net

The Chapter will gather for a 36-hour Advent retreat on Nov. 28-30 at the Spiritual Life Center in Wichita, Kansas.

WISCONSIN CHAPTER
Dean, Tim Duesenberg, stmaximos@aol.com

At our October 31 - November 1 retreat we accommodated our LCMS participants and used the LSB for the prayer services. In addition, we had a discussion on Missouri Synod Pastor, Bryan Wofmueller's recent book, "Has American Christianity Failed?" Reverend Craig Nehring, STS, served as Chaplain, and Reverend Mark Knappe, STS, preached at the Holy Communion Service.

From the Vicar

Defining and Pursuing Discipleship, Part 3
Earthly Vocation

"If you love me, you will keep my commandments" (John 14:15). Catechizing into the faith entails holding one another accountable to the Lord's commands, prominent among them the two commandments upon which "depend all the Law and the Prophets": "You shall love the Lord your God with all our heart and with all your soul and with all your mind… and you shall love your neighbor as yourself" (Matt. 22:37-40). A life centered in the assembly of Word and Sacrament is formed for service in courageous joy in the common tasks and relationships of human community. "Go in peace, serve the Lord," we say; and so, disciples go forth into the world to serve, bearing the peace of Christ with them. They go to be salt, to prepare and preserve the world for its final fulfillment. They go to be light, reflecting in dark places the True Light that shines on them. They do this as teachers, physicians, soldiers, farmers, millworkers, merchants – any number of vocations – practicing humble kindness and justice for the glory of God.

Discipleship in the world calls for careful, measured

obedience to Christ in love. "It seems to me," writes Luther in the Large Catechism, "that we shall have our hands full to keep these commandments, practicing gentleness, patience, love towards enemies, chastity, kindness, etc., and all that is involved in doing so. But such works are not important or impressive in the eyes of the world" (Large Catechism 1:313).[1] Baptismal identity interacts with civic responsibility, and the fruit of the Spirit is transformative of human community in many and various ways. The righteous pursuit of civil justice is an arena for discipleship, as government is an estate ordained by God to curtail the outward effects of sinful violence and thus make possible the peaceful sharing of Christian love. Likewise, marriage is a holy estate, a "wedding" of Gen. 2:28 ("be fruitful and multiply") with Matt. 28 ("make disciples"). Parenthood is a divinely ordained office whereby mothers and fathers provide for their children's instruction in the faith, and the whole congregation – whether married, single, or widowed – shares in the ongoing catechetical task of welcoming these children "into the Lord's family."[2]

In the shifting circumstances of life, a disciple is called always to reckon with the baptismal mystery of having died to sin and risen a new creation in Christ.[3] And the world being what it is, the yield of such persistence in faith will mean suffering. Jesus bluntly explains this reality: "Do not think that I have come to bring peace to the earth. I have not come to bring peace, but a sword. For I have come to set a man against his father, and a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law. And a person's enemies will be those of his own household" (Matt. 10:34-36). To follow Christ as Lord is to be *partisan*: to remain steadfast in the external Word of God, a Word that is blessedly accessible to all but uncompromisingly opposed to alteration.[4] To know the truth of the Lord is to be free from the empty promises of the devil, and holding fast to Baptism means refusing to "submit again to a yoke of slavery" (Gal. 5:1). To be a disciple means to confront the forces of evil with the discerning mind of Christ and the courage of faith, and to suffer the consequences – even unto death – with the joy and peace of the Holy Spirit and the sure and certain hope of life everlasting before us.

You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit and that your fruit should abide… (John 15:16).

To be a disciple is to be formed by the Word of God. In obedience to our Lord's Great Commission, the North American Lutheran Church should understand its call to be *mission-driven* in the context of the baptismal vocation to be *Christ-centered* and *congregationally focused*. The NALC was formed precisely as an act of discipleship – to speak the truth in love, obeying the Risen Lord's command to "feed my sheep" (John 21:17) by faithful discernment in wisdom and committed action in accountability to ensure that the Gospel is properly preached and the sacraments rightly administered (Augsburg Confession, Article 7).[5]

We are living in a time when the story, content, and morality of the faith are alien to the world around us, a world that is rapidly engaging in open hostility toward the Gospel. Our Lord's command is to make disciples: to sow the seed of the Word and to tend the stalks of faith when they sprout forth. We should use Luther's Catechisms regularly as serious introductions to Holy Scripture and indispensable tools in the reckoning process of faith ("What does this mean for us?").[6] We are to teach what it means to be chosen by our Lord in Holy Baptism and to adhere to Christ and be conformed to him in Holy Communion, proclamation, sharing the Word in reading and liturgy, and daily prayer. The Church will thereby prepare disciples of all ages to confess Christ, to live out their calling, and to suffer for the Lord's sake amidst the changes and chances of life.[7] We must recognize that fruit in the world blossoms from branches connected to their eucharistic source, and thus that discipleship occurs, first and foremost, in the worship life of the congregation. This is life together in the Body, the *totus Christus* of the Paschal Mystery: complete participation of disciples in the suffering, death, and resurrection of Christ.[8] Discipleship in human community thus depends upon active incorporation in the divine community: with the Son, before the Father, in the Spirit.

[1] *The Book of Concord, The Confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church* [hereafter cited as BC], trans. and ed. Theodore Tappert (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1959), 407.
[2] *Lutheran Book of Worship* (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1978), 125.
[3] David Yeago, "Theses on Discipleship" (TMs), Thesis 2.8, 2.9.
[4] David Yeago, "Authority in the Church 1: The Authority of the Word of God in the Church" (paper presented at the NALC Pastors Conference in Orlando, FL, February 10-12, 2015), 5.
[5] BC, 32.
[6] Yeago, "Authority 1," 14.
[7] Yeago, "Discipleship," Thesis 2.8.
[8] Robert W. Jenson, "Catechesis for Our Time," in *Marks of the Body of Christ*, eds. Carl E. Braaten and Robert W. Jenson (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1999), 141.

DE TRINITATE
News and reflection from the Society of the Holy Trinity
Volume 19, Number 3, Concluding Ordinary Time 2016
Editor: Leslie C. Thayer
Editorial office: 2621 Dysart Avenue, Altoona, PA 16602 / 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: Reverend Patrick J. Rooney, 450 Ridge Road, Dillsburg, PA 17019 / 717-870-1154 pastorrooney@gmail.com
Vicar: Reverend Nathan H. Yoder, 415 W. Main Street, Maiden, NC 28650 / 828-428-8527 Yoder234@hotmail.com
Secretary: Reverend Pari Bailey, P.O. Box 116, Belview, MN 56214 / 507-938-3285 revsbailey@redred.com
Bursar: Reverend David A. Aanonson, 1913 Farrel Drive, Coralville, IA 52241 / 319-339-1961 daanonson@mchsi.com
Society Website: www.societyholytrinity.org