DE TRINITATE

Newsletter of the Society of the Holy Trinity

Societas Trinitatis Sanctae

From The Senior

"Jesus Christ is the same, yesterday, today and forever." Hebrews 13:8

Having reached the three quarters of a century mark (plus almost one!) in my life and perhaps because there are now fewer days ahead than behind me, when we come to this time of new year, whether lunar or the new year in the life of the Church, I find myself looking forward more than backwards, worrying less about what has happened in the past, while focusing my energy and excitement on what is to come. And in the life of our Society, there are a great number of things that I am looking forward to in the coming year that I believe will have great impact upon our life together.

In early February our Leadership Council will meet once again at Camp St. Christopher, SC. We will conduct the business of the Society including passing a budget, but we will also talk seriously about the timing and location of future General Chapter gatherings; discuss the issue of what we mean by "discipline" in our Rule and in our life together and prepare for the upcoming General Chapter retreat in September 2024.

And speaking of the General Chapter, we will meet at St. Mary of the Lake University once again from 24-26 September. This will be the 27th year since our foundation, providing us yet again with the opportunity to ponder the position of our Society in the face of a changing Church all around us. But so that we might be grounded more fully into our identity, our theme for our teaching theologians this coming year will be "The Holy Office of Ministry: The heart of our Rule; The joy of our identity. The Joy of our Rule; The Heart of our identity." Bishop Will Willimon (UMC) and The Rev'd Dr. John Pless (LCMS) will be our presenters along with a panel of our own members led by The Rev'd Dr. Nathan Yoder STS.

This will also be the year where we elect a Senior and a Bursar, the first by pure ecclesiastical ballot and the second by majority vote of the members in our Chapter meeting on Thursday morning. In our Society we do not "re-elect" any individual, but rather understand that each election is an opportunity for the Spirit to work among us, raising up one who will lead as Senior and serve as Bursar. I know that travel is difficult, and scheduling is not always easy. But I would ask you to make every effort to remain through the close of the retreat at lunch time on Thursday so that the whole body can be present for the installation of the Senior and the Bursar at the closing service of the Word.

we do not "re-elect" any individual, but rather understand that each election is an opportunity for the Spirit to work among us

The elections at General Chapter are not the only ones scheduled for this year – indeed 2024 could be termed the year of the elections – since 10 of our chapters, almost half our total, are due to hold election for a Dean at some point during this coming year. That is a lot of elections in one year and it will mean a busy year for those appointed to oversee such elections. We are in the process of finalizing the schedule for these elections. Our Vicar has already helped out in one chapter and other Deans may also be asked to assist. Please keep all our chapters in your prayers as we undertake this important work under our Rule.

So, we have a full year ahead of us. But, as I said at the start, at my age, I spend less time these days worrying about the past but, instead I look forward to whatever days or years

the Lord should give me in this last quarter of life. But that is primarily because I have come to appreciate and perhaps more profoundly understand that, as the author of Hebrews tells us, "Christ is the same yesterday, today and forever." Aging continues to give me that understanding of learning to let go, to not control but rather trust fully in this One who does not change, who is the same now and forever. So, while I will always look forward to the coming years and the already new year of the Church, I do so confident in the unchanging nature of Christ beside whom I walk, trusting in His divine promises and confident in His future for me, the Church and our beloved Society. May the one who was, and is, and is to come, guide and strengthen each of you on your journey.

The Rev'd Paddy Rooney, STS Senior.

Calendar Campaign

STS Lutheran Liturgical Calendars by Ashby Co. ARE NOW AVAILABLE....

As always, the requested donation is $5 per copy, $25 for six. Please add $10 for USPS Priority Mail shipping. Orders of less than six will be shipped by regular USPS mail. $5 per copy plus $5 postage.

Over and above donations will help to share complimentary copies with campus ministries, seminaries, judicatory officials and other faith-based communities and institutions.

All proceeds will benefit the general fund of our Society. Shipped calendars will be accompanied by a complementary poster size wall calendar.

Please order by message or email to keithlforni@gmail.com, 815 600 3030, Fb: Keith Forni.

Payment by check written to SOCIETY OF THE HOLY TRINITY is to be sent to:

The Rev'd Keith Forni STS, 1316 Plainfield Rd, Joliet IL 60435-4026

Note "2024 STS Calendars" on the memo line.

Chapter Updates

Carolinas Chapter

The Carolinas Chapter continues to study the seven Marks of the Church in the study of each mark during one of our three annual Chapter retreats. The Chapter gathered most recently for the study of Lutheran Baptismal Rites. We will gather for Advent Retreat over December 4-5 for the consideration of Baptism in The Sacred Scriptures and The Lutheran Church's Hymnody instructed by The Rev'ds Carl Voges STS and Andrew Weisner STS. The Rev'ds Steve Saxe STS and John Yost STS will serve as Confessors. The Rev'd Nathan Hooks STS will serve as Chaplain.

The Rev'd Steve Saxe, STS, Dean

Central Plains Chapter

The Central Plains chapter recently concluded its Advent Retreat at the St. Benedict Center and Christ the King retreat house in Schuyler Nebraska on December 5. We observed the Commemoration of Clement of Alexandria. 4 members were in attendance, with the Rev'd Senior Patrick Rooney, STS, there to conduct elections for a dean, along with a first time visitor to the society. The Rev'd Jeff Cottingham, STS, was elected dean, and the chapter continued it's own discussion of Cardinal Ratzinger's book *"Credo for Today."* A decision was also made to switch from three 24 hour retreats to two 40 hour retreats, to facilitate lengthy travel times and to aid in developing a rhythm to the prayer life of the chapter.

The Rev'd Jeff Cottingham, STS, Dean

New England Chapter

The New England Chapter met on All Saints Day in Milton, Massachusetts, for a discussion of *"Tokens of Trust"* by Rowan Williams. The chapter Advent gathering is Sunday, December 10 in Granby, Connecticut.

The Rev'd Ryan Mills, STS, Dean

Northern Illinois Chapter

The northern Illinois chapter will conduct an Advent Day Retreat on December 7 from 9:30AM -3:00 PM, observing Ambrose, Bishop of Milan. The location will be St. Augustine's Episcopal Church, in Wilmette Illinois. RSVP's were due November 30. The Rev'd Dr. Frank Senn, STS, will present "On Saints Ambrose and Augustine."

The Tri-Chapter retreat is upcoming on May 1-2, 2024, at Valparaiso University, between Northern Illinois, Great Rivers,

and the Indiana Chapters. The Rev'd James Wetztein will provide a tour of the Chapel of the Resurrection, while the Rev'd Matthew Becker, STS will present from his forthcoming book on fundamental theology, and the Rev'd Deacon Nick Denysenko will present on the Ukrainian Orthodox Church, the Russian Orthodox Church, and the war in Ukraine.

The Rev'd Keith Forni, STS, Dean

Wisconsin Chapter

The Wisconsin Chapter gathered for retreat November 6/7 at St. Norbert Abbey in DePere, WI. The Rev'd Jim Lehmann joined the Chapter to oversee the election of a dean. The Rev'd Andrew Zoerb was elected to serve as dean. Upcoming retreats: February 19-20, 2024, at St. Norbert Abbey; April 29-30, 2024 at St. Anthony Spiritual Center in Marathon, WI. Contact pastorandy@oursaviorsdenmark.org with inquiries.

The Rev'd Andrew Zoerb, STS, Dean

Reflections on the Rule

What difference does a Rule make? I can remember the first time I ever heard of the Society of the Holy Trinity – I was in Germany, teaching at the University of Munich, and encountered the website. I remember thinking, "wow, how lucky these men and women are to have that commitment to prayer, to each other, and to prayer for each other upholding their vows." Many years later, it is still that foundation of prayer, as expressed in chapters one and three of the Rule, that is such a touchstone for me and why the Rule makes such a difference in this Air Force chaplain's life. Military chaplains are often distant from their religious communities of origin, and I'm no exception – among 18–35-year-olds who are in the majority indifferent to religion, I haven't regularly led a Sunday service since my last deployment. What I have found is the solidarity of prayer in the Society, and the power of the daily prayer of the Church. We, as those who subscribe to the Rule, are shaped by and bound together by our prayer. We stand in atemporal solidarity with each other, praying in common when we are apart, and in physical union of prayer at Chapter and General Chapter retreats. This Rule that we share, and the daily office that we pray in common, is the touchstone of my ministry and the most "effective" and important thing that "we do." Called to extra-ordinary ministry, this practice the daily office, this Rule, and this ministerium: these are defining factors of my life, my service, and my vows.

The Rev'd Dr. Philip Stewart STS, Captain, US Air Force.

In Memoriam

The Rev'd Dr. Delmar Leander Baier STS (1934-2023) was an at-large member of the Society. Del served a year as a novice at St. Augustine's House before seeking ordination in 1961 in the Lutheran Church in Canada. He served various parishes and institutions in Canada throughout the remainder of his years.

The Rev'd Bruce Bond Hathaway STS (1938-2023) was a member of the Passavant Chapter. He was ordained in 1965 and served his entire ministry in Ohio, including his final 25 years at The Lutheran Church of the Master in Bedford, from where he retired in 2004. Bruce particularly enjoyed providing pastoral ministry to many generations of a family. He also had great respect for the liturgy, its historical richness and varieties of music.

Grant them both rest eternal, LORD, and let perpetual light shine upon them.

A Reminder

De Trinitate prints notices of members who have recently entered the church triumphant. If you are aware of a Society Member's death, please contact our Necrologist The Rev'd Christopher Staley, STS, at cbstaley@netins.net with the name, date of death, and chapter affiliation.

From The Vicar

An old couple has their friends over for dinner one evening, and after the meal the two men retire to the living room, while the women remain chatting at the table. The one guy says to his friend, "Hey, we went to a really great restaurant. I think you'd really like it. They had good portions for low prices, and it was all really tasty!" "Sounds great! I'll have to check it out. What's the place called?" The first one furrows his brow and thinks a moment, struggling to remember. "Umm . . . What's the name of that flower . . . they are usually red or pink. . . you give them for Valentine's . . . thorny stems?" "A rose?" "Yea, that's it!" the first man says and shouts to the next room, "Hey, Rose, what's the name of that restaurant we went to?"

Memory is a wonderful blessing. But when we lose it, we can begin to lose focus. It is good for us to occasionally pause to ask two questions: "Why does the Society of the Holy Trinity exist?" And, "Why am I here?" These two questions in tandem may help us stay on track.

The Founding Statement highlights these issues: "Concerning the Name of God; Concerning the Mission of the Church; Concerning the Ordained Ministry; Concerning Revelation and Authority; Concerning the Magisterium in the Church; Concerning the Law of God; Concerning Right Order in the Church's Worship." The gravity of these foundational matters called for the formation of the Society. Have these been resolved in an orthodox manner? If so, then perhaps the need for the Society no longer exists. If the threats have grown, then the Society of the Holy Trinity is more important than before. From my perspective, these issues are more significant than ever.

But "Why am I here?" We are created and called to worship the Lord our God. The Society is a prayer ministerium. Developing a life of prayer shapes and molds us to the praise and glory of God.

But "Why am I here?" When rapid changes were taking place in the Church, many, including me, came to the Society of the Holy Trinity because we understood that it was a safe place to be. To a large degree, that is true. The concerns expressed in the Founding Statement matches what many have experienced. So we are here because we find encouragement to continue as pastors and to discuss ways to deal with the situation we face. That is a good thing. The Society exists for this.

What happens when the pressure is reduced and we learn to deal with untenable situations? Then "Why am I here?" We are here for the sake of others. As we have received the benefits of those who were here when we signed the Rule, we are here for those who continue to need the conversation and consolation of the saints. "We will gather to help one another to be faithful to the promises spoken when we were ordained." (Founding Statement) We are here because we made a commitment – to God and to one another.

What happens when the Society disappoints us? Then "Why am I here?" We remember that we are sinners who know of forgiveness and restoration. Remember the old saying, "If you ever find the perfect congregation, please don't join it. You will ruin it." We are always in need of renewal.

Memory is a wonderful blessing. We pray for the gift of the Holy Spirit. Jesus promised: "But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you." (John 14:26)

The Rev'd Jim Lehmann, STS
Vicar

DE TRINITATE
News and Reflection from the Society of the Holy Trinity
Volume 26, Number 4, Advent 2023
Editor: The Rev'd Jeff Cottingham, STS
Editorial office: c/o Trinity Lutheran Church, 2102 Ave. G, Gothenburg Nebraska, 69138 - email: PastorJeff@trinitylutherangothenburg.com
To be placed on the De Trinitate *mailing list or to report a change of address, please contact the Secretary, below.*
Senior: The Rev'd Patrick Rooney, STS 11300 Saddleview Court, Raleigh, NC 27613 / 717-870-1154 / pastorrooney@gmail.com
Vicar: The Rev'd Jim Lehmann, STS 5823 E. 1800 North Road, Fithian, IL, 61844 / 217-417-4156 / jtl611@hotmail.com
Secretary: The Rev'd Pari Bailey, STS P.O. Box 116, Belview, MN 56214 / 507-938-3285 / revsbailey@redred.com
Bursar: The Rev'd Jay Denne, STS 4612 Grant St., Sioux City, IA 51108 / 712-898-1678 / revjaydenne@gmail.com
Society Website: www.societyholytrinity.org