DE TRINITATE

Newsletter of the Society of the Holy Trinity

Societas Trinitatis Sanctae

From The Senior

A Report from the Leadership Council Retreat 2024

The Leadership Council of the Society of the Holy Trinity met at Camp St. Christopher, Seabrook Island, South Carolina, 6-8 February 2024. We had an excellent turnout of Deans and Officers and were joined on zoom by our secretary and four other deans.

We had a full agenda but began by listening to some of the issues that continue to concern our members, especially regarding the issues they confront in their respective judicatories. Chief among these concerns is the uncertainty facing some of our membership in possible changes to structure and tradition through an ongoing study and the continued division in our judicatories over any number of issues. But other more practical concerns included the shrinking number of retreat centers available; the cost of chapter retreats; the ability of retreat centers to handle the physical needs of members as they age; the geographic spread of our members and how some members, having retired, find some difficulty in relating the Rule to their new positions. These are all ongoing issues for our Society to continue addressing.

One of the major discussions centered on the possibility of moving our General Chapter to another location. While many of us have grown to love our location at St. Mary of the Lake and it has become a sort of "mother house" for us, we are faced with more stringent rules and regulations each year combined with increasing costs. There is also the difficulty some of our members who must navigate from one building to the next. Over the years we have looked at other options, but none has quite worked for us. However now we have a viable option and that is St. Meinrad Archabbey in Indiana. Our Vicar, Jim Lehman, visited the archabbey and has been working with the staff. The abbey is also a seminary and that is the space we would use. There is a marvelous chapel with an organ which we can use. The dining room and social area, with a bar, are in the same building. All rooms are air conditioned and have private bathrooms. Our meetings would be in the next building, which is only 50 feet away under a covered walkway. The closest airport would be Indianapolis.

The biggest challenge is that we could not be there when the seminarians are in session. That means a change of time for our gathering from September to late June or early July. The Leadership Council has approved this change which means that in 2026 we will be at our new home, likely through at least 2027. Logically then this year and next will still be at St. Mary of the Lake. It will not be easy to make this change and the Council will review the issue as we move forward.

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We had some discussion about live streaming the General Chapter retreat and the difficulties that might involve. The consensus was that we wait until the move to our new site. Further discussion took place about an on-line chapter for those members who can no longer travel because of age or infirmity. This was supported but we have some work to do before it is established.

The Officers and others presented their reports. We have 10-chapter elections scheduled for 2024 which means a busy year. A budget was approved, and a report of our Founder's Fund was made available. It is our intention to distribute significant funds again this year to Seminarians.

Notice will go out in the Spring. We will have to find a new insurance company starting next year. Our IRS 990 form was filed.

We had received a significant gift from one of our now deceased members and it was the consensus that we use some of those funds to develop some learning videos on presiding and leading the Divine Offices. The NALC has expressed an interest in working with us and we will see how that goes.

In a time of reflection about the challenges facing the Society in the future, we addressed the whole issue of pan-Lutheranism and whether such an understanding is viable in our current climate. Recently one member resigned from the Society because they can no longer accept the ordination of women while others have serious concerns about whether we can talk to each other in the light of our ecclesial bodies moving further and further apart. Can the Society remain one of the few truly pan-Lutheran bodies in the light of these challenges? This will be the subject of a further article in our next issue.

The details of the upcoming General Chapter in September were discussed. The General Chapter will meet 24-26 September in Mundelein.

Finally, we engaged in some fruitful discussion on how we understand discipline in the life of the Society. Clearly there is both internal discipline e.g. how we choose to regulate our prayer life and observance of the Rule and external discipline addressing our members.

So again, it was a full but very good Leadership retreat, and much was accomplished. I want to thank all our leadership, both Deans and Officers, who give so much time and commitment to the various offices to which they have been elected and for that we can only say Thanks be to God.

In Christ

The Rev'd Paddy Rooney, STS Senior.

In Memoriam

Comforted with the promise of the resurrection, we are nevertheless saddened to report the deaths of two of our members over the past few months. A brief obituary follows for each of our brothers who have fallen asleep in the Lord.

The Rev'd Dr. James Scherer STS (1926-2023) was a member of the Northern Illinois Chapter. James was ordained in 1952, and served as a missionary in China and alongside his wife, Frances, in Japan. James was called back to the United States in 1956 to serve as Dean of the Lutheran School of Missions of the Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago, and later served there as Professor of World Mission and Church History, retiring in 1992. In addition, from 1977-1984, James was chair of the International Commission on Church Cooperation of the Lutheran World Federation.

The Rev'd Dr. Wolf Knappe STS (1926-2024) was a member of the Wisconsin Chapter. Wolf was ordained in Augsburg, Germany, in 1949, and served a church in Munich before immigrating to the United States. Here, he served parishes in Illinois, Wisconsin, and Pennsylvania. In addition, Wolf taught for a year at Trinity Lutheran Seminary in Nebraska.
Following his retirement in 1991, Wolf continued to serve as interim minister and supply pastor.
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.

Chapter Updates

Central Plains Chapter

The Central Plains Chapter at it's December retreat made a decision to move to having two 40 hour retreats, instead of our three 24 hour retreats in the past. The decision is largely based on the travel time for some chapter members (7 hours for one), and the difficulty found in establishing a retreat rhythm in only 24 hours. Our next retreat is scheduled for April 15-17 in Schuyler Nebraska.

The Rev'd Jeff Cottingham, STS, Dean

Great Rivers Chapter

The Great Rivers chapter will be in retreat March 18-19, 2024 at the Toddhall Retreat Center in Columbia Illinois. We will observe the Lesser Festival of Joseph, Guardian of Jesus. We will also read and discuss the Apostolic Exhortation of John Paul II, *"Redemptoris Custos"* (On the Guardian of the Redeemer), concerning the "Person and Mission of Saint Joseph in the Life of Christ and of the Church.

The Rev'd Ken Tegtmeier, STS, Dean

New England Chapter

The New England Chapter holds its Lenten Retreat March 4-5 at St. Joseph's Retreat House, Milton, Mass. The Rev. Dr. Richard Johnson will present, "What Does This Mean Now? The Small Catechism for 21st Century Pastors."

The Rev'd Ryan Mills, 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

An Autobiography

(Written on June 25, 2003. This is the date on which the Augsburg Confession was delivered in 1530. It was also on this date that I was released from the PW camp near Ulm, Germany in 1945. This ended the war for me and has been a day of special thanksgiving for me ever since).

I was born on March 30, 1926, together with my twin brother Manfred, at home, in Hohegrethe, near Koblenz, Germany. The "Hohegrethe" was a Biblisches Erholungsheim (a Bible Retreat Center) which my father, the Rev. Dr. Wilhelm Knappe, directed from 1925 to 1931.

God gave me believing parents and eventually 4 siblings (my brother plus 3 sisters) that were fun to grow up with. On May 14 I was baptized, together with my brother, in our home by our father. God called me to be his child in holy baptism. In 1931 Dad received a call to St. Matthew's Lutheran Church in Munich, so that is where I grew up; started Grade School in 1932, Gymnasium in 1936.

I was drafted as Luftwaffenhelfer (Air Force Helper) in 1943. This essentially was service in a light flak (anti-aircraft) battery. It was followed by service in a Mountain Ranger unit. I was taken prisoner by Allied forces on May 3, 1945 and released again 8 weeks later (see above). Both of my parents had been killed in an air raid on July 21, 1944 so I had no home to go to. But I was fortunate to be able to start my seminary training at the University of Erlangen that Fall. I graduated from Seminary in 1948 and received a scholarship to do graduate work in the United States for one year. I earned a Masters of Theology (STM) from the Chicago Lutheran Seminary, located in Maywood, IL in 1949. I went back to Germany that year and was ordained on November 27, 1949 in St. Anna Lutheran Church in Augsburg, Germany. I served Epiphany Lutheran Church in Munich for 2 years and then received a call to St. Peter's Lutheran Church in Wine Hill, near Steeleville, IL.

On August 29, 1950 I was married to Inga, nee Korte who has been my faithful life companion throughout all these years.

ON March 5, 2005 at 2AM, God called my beloved Inga. She had battled multiple myeloma for over 4 years with great fortitude. May she rest in peace and may the eternal light shine on her. She was laid to rest in Elmwood Cemetery, next to our little Stevie and also her parents and her Uncle Paul. Jesus tells us: I live, and you shall live also. (John 14:19)

God blessed us with 3 children: Mark, Jane and Stevie. Our greatest sorrow came when we lost Stevie in an accident in Chicago when he was only 7 ½ years old. Our only comfort: He was and is a child of God, made His in holy baptism and we can look forward to seeing him and all our loved ones when our time comes to depart this earthly life for a better kingdom.

From Wine Hill we went to Nebraska where I was teaching New Testament at Trinity Lutheran Seminary for a year.

Then I followed a call to be mission developer in Belleville, IL where we organized St. Stephen's Lutheran Church in 1957. Then followed calls to Lyons-Pell Lake, WI (a dual parish) in 1957, Chicago (St. Paul) in 1961, Philadelphia (Tabor) in 1970 and Brookfield, IL (Faith) in 1986.
In 1977 I received the degree of "Doctor of Sacred Theology" (STD) from the Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago. I retired from Brookfield in 1991. In my retirement I was privileged to serve as interim pastor at Tabor (Chicago), Holy Trinity (Berkeley, IL) and St. Peter & St. Paul (Blue Island).
I am grateful that between these interims, I was still able to do some ministry: Supply preaching, conducting German services in Naperville once a month, doing some teaching and lecturing etc.
I am looking forward to the time when God will call me to His heavenly home. I ask for His grace to keep me on His way, to be with my wife and family and preserve them all in the faith. May He be gracious to all of us for the sake of Jesus Christ, His Son, our Lord.

The Rev'd Wolf Dietrich Knappe, STS, of Blessed memory

From The Vicar

When I was much younger, our family would occasionally go to a lake with a small amusement park. The roller coaster only had four or five cars and they never went up-side-down. Then, we were much more easily entertained. At the shore, a small machine which, for a coin or two, would dispense popcorn into your hand. The fish knew where it was and when you fed them, the water would boil with carp easily over 12 inches long competing with one another for a morsel. Were they hungry? No. However, one can always eat more popcorn.
For what are we hungry? Spiritually, we know the answer. Humanly, we know our inclination. Empty calories find their way to parts of our body and are hard to remove. Empty promises of pleasure become habits that are hard to control. "But each person is tempted when he is lured and enticed by his own desire. Then desire when it has conceived gives birth to sin, and sin when it is fully grown brings forth death." (James 1:14-15) From Cain, to David, to Solomon, to Paul, to Augustine, to our own lives, we know how alluring sin is. "For I have the desire to do what is right, but not the ability to carry it out." (Romans 7:17).

We are in the season of Lent. Although true throughout our lives, this especially is a time of thinking more deeply about the power of sin, death, and the power of the devil. We know that pastors are sinners too, but perhaps especially pastors are pursued by a roaring lion seeking someone to devour. We know where we can go for help in this battle. CHAPTER V of THE RULE on CONFESSION AND ABSOLUTION states: "Individual or personal confession of sins is to be kept and used by us for the sake of the absolution, which is the word of forgiveness spoken by a fellow pastor as from God himself." Find a discreet and understanding pastor with whom you can confess your sins. Trust the words of absolution. And, make yourself available to others who need both confession and absolution.

But there is more. Relief from the burden of sin leads to time for the amendment of life. Chapter V.6. "As absolved penitents, expect to be held accountable by the confessor for reconciliation with those whom we have offended and restoration of what we have taken or broken." Here is where we can help one another. Expect to be held accountable and be thankful that someone cares enough to follow up.

For what are we hungry? Jesus said, "I am the bread of life; whoever comes to me shall not hunger, and whoever believes in me shall never thirst." Here is a promise that will not fail. Here is life in the Savior that gives true joy. Thanks be to God for this season of Lent.

The Rev'd Jim Lehmann, STS
Vicar

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