DE TRINITATE

Newsletter of the Society of the Holy Trinity

Societas Trinitatis Sanctae

From The Senior

The Unity of the Body

In recent months, I have become more and more aware of certain tensions within our Society that have not only raised concerns for me but have driven me deeper into reflection and prayer about how we seek to "maintain the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace." (Ephesians 4:3)

Now don't get me wrong, there have been tensions in our whole identity since the Society was formed but more critically in our very identity of what it means to be part of the Lutheran tradition. Indeed, one of the things that attracted me to become part of this tradition was the very idea of living with the many dialectical tensions that we Lutherans seem to almost relish. The tension between law and gospel and simultaneously saint and sinner and so many others have come to be a part of my very identity, and I would not live without them.

But there are other tensions that are not as healthy or good and they are what concern me for the common life we live in the Society. Some are the tensions that exist in the world, the ongoing divisions in our culture, political, economic and social, which insidiously begin to seep into our life together. The increasing tribalism within our general culture can then be carried over to our Society and result in additional stresses and strains upon us. There is already a certain inherent tension in our life together given that our membership represents at least 8 different Lutheran bodies each with their own ethos and culture and each with differing policy positions on any number of issues ranging from the ordination of women, human sexuality issues, open or closed communion and many more. Again, such tensions have been with us from the founding retreat as we grappled with the issue of whether to celebrate the holy Eucharist given that we had members from both ELCA and LCMS. (The irony of course is that some of us from both traditions attended the mass presided over by the Jesuit priest where we were all welcomed to the Lord's table).

So, it is not so much the tensions themselves that prove critical but rather the way we deal with them and how we then deal with each other. What is often lacking among us, I fear, is that "bond of peace" to which Paul refers. And this has become true especially as the tensions within each of our ecclesial bodies gets ratcheted up and spill over into our life together. While those tensions between our ecclesial bodies have been with us since the beginning, never have those tensions been greater than now. More and more, with issue after issue, each of our ecclesial bodies find themselves forming more of a silo mentality which in turn leads to the secondary effect that if you are not with us, you are against us. Such tension can then lead to discord and discord to dissension and dissension to division. The result is neither healthy nor good for the "bond of peace" between us.

It is not so much the tensions themselves that prove critical but rather the way we deal with them and how we then deal with each other.

With our theme this year's General Chapter being on the holy office of ministry, it will be good for us to pause and reflect not only upon this fundamental part of our identity (after all one cannot subscribe to the Rule unless one is ordained to the holy ministry of Word and Sacrament) but also how we can renew that "unity of spirit in the bond of peace." Indeed, I have chosen this text for my Pastoral Reflection at mass on Tuesday but I have also moved the time of mass to later on Tuesday afternoon so that we might open with the service of Corporate Confession and Forgiveness, a time and opportunity to see where there have been, or continue to be, breaches between us and so come in penance to seek Christ's forgiveness. For as Paul goes on to point out in his letter, we are already one in Christ, one in the Body of Christ believing that there is only "one Lord, one faith, one baptism and one Father who is above all and through all and in all."

So, I pray for unity in the Body which is the Church and I also pray for unity in that body which is our beloved Society. Join me in that prayer so that we may indeed find a way to live together in the bond of peace.

Pax vobiscum

The Rev'd Senior Paddy Rooney, STS

General Chapter Retreat

The 2024 General Chapter retreat of the Society of the Holy Trinity will convene at St. Mary of the Lake University in Mundelein 24-26 September. Our theme will be the holy Office of Ministry. Our teaching theologians will be Bishop Will Willimon (UMC) Duke University and the Reverend Dr. John Pless (Concordia Fort Wayne). On Wednesday evening we will have two of our own theologians The Rev'd Dr. Nathan Yoder STS and the Rev'd Dr. Thomas Drobena STS serve as a responder panel while also sharing their own thoughts about the holy office.

Registration is through the chapter deans or through the Senior if you are at-large. We look forward to seeing you there.

Elections

This year, pursuant to our Rule, we will conduct elections for the offices of Senior and Bursar. The election of a Senior will be by "pure ecclesiastical ballot" and will be directed by The Rev'd Rod Ronneberg STS, Dean of the Chesapeake/ Potomac chapter.

The election of Bursar is by simple majority vote and will be held at the business meeting on Thursday morning.

The installation of both Senior and Bursar will be at the closing Service of the Word on Thursday morning.

Please be in prayer for the Spirit's guidance as we prepare to enter into this retreat and election process.

From The Secretary

Dear friends,

As mentioned, the General Chapter Retreat will take place September 24-26 at the University of St. Mary of the Lake Conference Center in Mundelein, IL. If you have not yet told your dean you are attending, please do that now. As previously stated, we do not have access to Joseph and Mary House for lodging this year because of renovations. All of us will fit in the Main Lodge, as we did in 2023. I will try to accommodate all requests for single rooms, but preference will go toward those with a medical necessity for a single room. While not ideal, retreatants are able to book their own housing at local hotels, if preferred.

If you have not yet sent payment to me for your early arrival (Monday night, additional meals) or for guests you are bringing, please do so right away. The deadline for registration this year is August 28, and cancellations must be received before September 6th. Last-minute additions are always welcome.

Additionally, if you have not yet sent your dues in, please take care of that immediately!

The Rev'd Pari R. Bailey, STS, Secretary

2025 Liturgical Calendars

Our Society's standing order with the Ashby Company is on hold as the publisher is still seeking an editor. An alternative, single page STS calendar poster will hopefully be available at the General Chapter Retreat.

For the Leadership Council,

The Rev'd Keith Forni, STS

A Reflection

At the request of the Senior, the following article was written by Br. Richard, the Prior of St. Augustine's House located in Michigan. While ecumenical in its structure and organization, St. Augustine's was designed to serve the Lutheran tradition in the best of our evangelical catholic understanding and therefore plays an import part in this history and tradition of our own Order in this Society.

After Church sometime in the early part of the last century a teenage boy watched the ladies of the altar guild spread a dust cover over the altar to keep it clean until the next Sunday. He wondered why Lutherans do not use their churches all through the week, as Roman Catholic and some Anglican Churches do. This passing concern a century ago might be the germ from which our community here at St. Augustine's House sprang.

The boy was Arthur Carl Kreinheder. In mid-life he left his business career to study theology in Sweden. He also lived in France for a time in the newly formed Taize Protestant monastic community. After being ordained a priest in the Swedish Church he returned to the United States in 1956 and formed the Fellowship of St. Augustine to pray for and foster the establishment of a monastic community for Lutheran men. Two years later he founded the Congregation of the Servants of Christ at St. Augustine's House. Since then, there has always been a place in American Lutheranism where the altar is not covered up on weekdays and prayer is said daily.

In this we offer to the church an embodiment of one of the goals of the Society of the Holy Trinity as expressed in the first chapter of its Rule: "The Society will be bound together in common prayer. The daily prayer of the Church (the divine office or the liturgy of the hours) forms the personal discipline of the members because of its biblical content, Trinitarian and Christological orthodoxy, and roots in the catholic tradition."

The Rule of St. Benedict calls this the Work of God (Opus Dei). This can be understood in two ways. First that the worship of God is work. It is not a hobby or diversion to occupy our free time. It is an undertaking that involves effort, determination, and discipline. And, like other jobs, it can sometimes seem routine and tedious.

The Work of God can also be understood as the work God does in and through us when we place ourselves reverently in His presence. The Sunday Eucharist is the primary memorial of the Lord's Resurrection, but whenever two or three gather to pray in the name of the Lord there is an evocation of that moment on Easter Sunday when the risen Jesus stood in the midst of his disciples and said to them "Peace to you" and a reminder of his promise, "I am with you always, to the close of the age." The extensive use of the psalms in the daily office reminds us that we are still living in Biblical times and are a part of the one and ongoing history of salvation.

We welcome guests—especially pastors— to join us for a time to share in the rhythm of daily prayer as it is lived out here. We would also ask that if they identify serious, devout young men who might benefit from a retreat with us or even discover a vocation, that they point them our way.

Br. Richard OSB

Chapter Updates

Carolinas Chapter

The Chapter's Advent Retreat will be held 2-3 December at the Catholic Conference Center, Hickory, NC. This Retreat concludes our year-long study on the Church's Third Mark – The Holy Eucharist, led by the Rev'd Rodney Eberhardt, STS. In the coming year, 2025, the Chapter will initiate its yearlong study of the Church's Fourth Mark – Confession and Forgiveness.

The Rev'd Carl A. Voges, STS, Dean

Central Plains Chapter

The Central Plains Chapter will next meet in Retreat December 9-11 at the Christ the King Retreat Center in Schuyler Nebraska.

The Rev'd Jeff Cottingham, STS, Dean

Northern Illinois Chapter

The Northern Illinois Chapter is planning a daytime All Saints retreat for Monday, November 4th. Details will be available soon. Registration can now be made with the Dean.

The Rev'd Keith Forni, STS, Dean

Wisconsin Chapter

The Wisconsin Chapter will be in retreat on October 28-29, 2024 at St. Norbert Abbey in De Pere, WI.

The Rev'd Andrew Zoerb, STS,

From The Vicar

Laquiesha is a parking lot attendant at our regional hospital. She is the last employee of the hospital that you see as you leave. She always has a pleasant, friendly smile as you pay for the privilege of using their lot. That small gesture means more that she may realize. Except for the healthy birth of a baby, people really would rather be somewhere else. At least for the moment, the visitor has a positive experience.

I retired from full time ministry 16 months ago and since then have not been at the hospital once. Recently I've been visiting regularly. The first time I came to Laquiesha's station, she automatically opened the gate. I asked her, "How did you remember that I am a pastor?" (I wasn't wearing my clergy collar since I wasn't there as a pastor.) She replied, "I try to remember all of the pastors. God bless you!" One could easily see that she is a person of faith. I encouraged her, reminding her that she has a real ministry to the people she meets. Of course she downplayed it, but thanked me for those comments.

You have probably had a similar experience where people simply are being kind. That is a good thing in itself. For Laquiesha, it may just be a natural character trait. But there is more. She tries to keep track of all the pastors who come, even one she hasn't seen in 16 or more months. Pastors, and by extension, the Church, are important to her. She is bearing witness to the love of Jesus Christ. Luther says that through the Gospel, we receive counsel in more than one way. One of which is "through the mutual conversation and consolation of the brethren." (Smalcald Articles Part III, Article IV)

Ordination has its roots in Holy Baptism. There, the Name of the Triune God is poured, new birth is given, and the call to ministry takes place. Baptism feeds the ministry of all Christians – ordained and lay. Out of the baptized children of God, the Holy Spirit calls certain individuals in a particular way to the peculiar Office of Holy Ministry. Despite the current parlance of "my call", we believe that it is "God's call" on a person. It belongs to God, not to us. This does not create a higher level of Christianity. Instead it is for the sake of the Gospel and the ministry of all. "And his gifts were that some should be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for the building up of the Body of Christ." (Ephesians 4:11-12 NRSV) Pastors are called to proclaim the power of the Gospel and to live the love of Christ. Our "conversation and consolation" strengthens the whole Body of Christ. Molded and nourished, the people of God begin to care for people who come their way in everyday life. "Preach the Gospel and if necessary, use words" is often mistakenly attributed to St. Francis of Assisi. It would reflect Francis more accurately to say "Preach the Gospel" and show people Jesus.

May we be faithful in our calling to preach the Gospel and show Jesus so that lives are transformed and the Church's ministry reaches out to the world. It may start with something as simple as a smile in a parking lot attendant's booth.

The Rev'd Jim Lehmann, STS

Vicar

A Reminder

De Trinitate prints notice of members who have recently entered the Church Triumphant. If you are aware of a Society member's death, please contact the Society's necrologist, the Rev'd Christopher Staley, STS at cbstaley@netins.net with name, date of death, and chapter affiliation.

DE TRINITATE
News and Reflection from the Society of the Holy Trinity
Volume 27, Number 3, Late Pentecost 2024
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