DE TRINITATE

Newsletter of the Society of the Holy Trinity

Societas Trinitatis Sanctae

From The Senior

WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE?

Our 2024 General Chapter is now behind us and, given the numerous positive comments I heard from members and guests, the theme and the speakers seemed to resonate with many. For that I am grateful to Bishop Wil Willimon and Dr. John Pless for their thoughtful presentations strongly supported by our own Dr. Nathan Yoder STS and Dr. Richard Johnson STS who both gave fine responses and entered into a helpful question and answer session.

I also want to thank our two preachers for their faithful service to the Word and thanks also to our chaplain who led us with grace and style. It was deliberate to have one of our preachers and our chaplain drawn from the cohort of our "younger" members within the Society so that their gifts and graces could be lifted up and shared within our community. While we must first and foremost honor the gifts given by the Spirit, we should also be seeking ways to prepare the future leaders within our Society so that when those of us who are now in our more advanced years enter the Church Triumphant, the next generations of leadership will be ready to continue our work and bear witness to our evangelical catholicity until Christ shall come again.

But we have to acknowledge that the election process at our General Chapter this year was challenged by a number of issues. There was confusion over the true nature of an "ecclesiastical ballot" as called for in our Rule and a less than clear understanding of what "consensus," a concept strongly rooted in our practice and tradition since the Society was formed, really meant. As a result, I will be asking the Leadership Council, when it meets in SC in February, to reflect upon the election process as called for in our Rule and to think about how we might seek to both better educate our members in preparation for future balloting and address issues around the process itself.

Where then do we go from here? Well first I am grateful to the Rev'ds Pari Bailey STS and Jim Lehman STS who have agreed to continue serving in their respective offices of Secretary and Vicar over the next three years. Along with the Rev'd Jay Denne STS whom you elected to serve as Bursar, the officers of the Society will remain the same over a period when we will have some significant challenges and changes and for that stability, I am immensely grateful.

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As noted above, the Leadership Council will meet in February and we can expect some substantive discussion, not only on the matter of consensus and elections, but on a number of issues as well. I very much look forward to the work we will do there and I am confident that the Leadership Council as a body, would covet your prayers as we meet 18-20 February 2025.

As you can note from the report of our secretary found elsewhere in this newsletter, 2025 will be the final year to hold our General Chapter at St. Mary of the Lake. It will be hard to leave that site after so many years there; indeed, it has become a special place for many of us with lots of memories. But I hope and pray that our move to St. Meinrad will open a new chapter for us and provide its own memories over the coming years.

Meanwhile our theme for the 2025 General Chapter will be "Nicaea at 1700 – an ecumenical conversation." We will have three speakers – Dr. Mathew Levering who teaches at St. Mary of the Lake Seminary and is Roman Catholic; Dr. David Ford who is Orthodox and teaches at St. Tikhon's Seminary; and Dr. Joel Elowsky who teaches at Concordia, St. Louis. I very much look forward to some stimulating conversations about the Council and what it means for each of these expressions of the One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church.

And just so that you can plan for our move to St. Meinrad, our dates for General Chapter in 2026 and 2027 are as follows:

15-18 June 2026 and 12-15 July 2027

The Leadership Council will work on themes for those two years.

We still have some significant details to work out regarding our move to St. Meinrad, especially the transportation to and from the airport. Jim Lehman and I plan to visit the site one more time and we will keep all of you updated regarding important information.

And one final item. 2027 will not only be an election year, but it will also be the 30th anniversary of the founding of the Society. This means some additional thought and planning needs to take place soon regarding how we want to mark this occasion. At present we are thinking about an organ concert with a nationally renowned figure and perhaps some reflection on the place of the Rule in the life of our Society.

Please continue to keep our dear Secretary Pari in your thoughts and prayers. Since returning from General Chapter, she has had a series of health challenges and issues and some of them have been very tough indeed. Please pray for her healing and wholeness and the return of a nice, quiet even boring routine (LOL) which I know she would value greatly.

So where do we go from here? Well we, as a body of pastors called to Word and Sacrament and as members of this Society, will trust to the Holy Spirit as we move into God's future. We have a number of challenges facing us. But I am confident that together, seeking "the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace," will overcome them. May Almighty God, Father Son and Holy Spirit bless and sustain our beloved Society and each of us both now and forever.

The Rev'd Senior Paddy Rooney, STS
Senior of the Society.

From The Secretary

Dear friends,

The General Chapter Retreat in September welcomed 130 attendees. 101 members attended, and we were pleased to receive six brothers who subscribed to the Rule: the Rev'd William Barrett and the Rev'd Harry Schenkel (Florida Chapter), the Rev'd James Fitzgerald and the Rev'd Robbie Ketcham (Chesapeake-Potomac Chapter), the Rev'd Daniel Landin (Indiana Chapter), and the Rev'd Robin Lutjohann (New England Chapter).

Next year the dates for the General Chapter are September 23-25. Please note that 2025 is our final year at University of St. Mary of the Lake, and also our final year for the General Chapter to be held in September. In 2026, we will be at our new home: St. Meinrad's Archabbey in St. Meinrad, Indiana (closest airport:

Louisville) and the dates are June 16-18. In 2027, the dates are July 13-15. St. Meinrad's will welcome the many of us who wish to come a day early, as we have done at Mundelein.

Please also remember that dues are due on Holy Trinity Sunday, June 15, 2025. Because of the timing of the General Chapter in 2026 and following, we will need to adjust timing for the dues. More information on that will be forthcoming after the Leadership Council meets in February.

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

Chapter Updates

Central Plains Chapter

The Central Plains chapter is meeting in retreat December 9-11, 2024 at the Christ the King retreat house/St. Benedict Center in Schuyler Nebraska. Father Thomas Lietner, OSB, director of Christ the King Priory, will facilitate a discussion on the rhythm and life in the rule of St. Benedict. We will also engage in study and discussion of the Messianic Psalms.

The Rev'd Jeff Cottingham, STS, dean

Florida chapter

Upcoming Retreats for 2025 are as follows:

March 17 - 18, 2025: the Rev'd Dr. Nathan Howard Yoder STS; teaching. June 16 - 17, 2025: the Rev'd Dr. John Eric Hurtgen, Dean, School of Theology; Campbellsville University. November 3 - 4 2025: the Rev'd Dr. Mark Mattes, Professor of Religion and Philosophy; Grand View College.

Our retreats are at San Pedro Center; Winter Park, Florida and most often we provide transportation to and from Orlando airport at no charge to you.

The Rev'd Fr Lawrence (Larry) Recla, STS, dean

Great rivers chapter

The Great Rivers Chapter met for its fall retreat at Toddhall Retreat Center, November 18-20, in Columbia, Illinois. Six members were present for our time together. As this was our full 2-day retreat, from Monday Noon to Wednesday Noon, we set aside Tuesday as a day of silence except for meals when we had to go to local restaurants for our meals. The Rev'd Norm Lillegard, STS, was our Teaching Theologian and presented a program entitled: Archeology, History and Homiletics. Our Vicar, the Rev'd Jim Lehmann, STS, was our chaplain.

Ken Tegtmeier, STS, dean

New England Chapter

The New England Chapter held its fall retreat at St Joseph Retreat House in Milton, Massachusetts, on the topic of Elert's "Der christliche Glaube". The Chapter's annual Advent gathering will be December 15 in Granby, Connecticut.

The Rev'd Ryan Mills, STS, dean

Wisconsin Chapter

The Wisconsin Chapter was in Reformation retreat on October 28-29, 2024 at St. Norbert Abbey in De Pere, Wisconsin. While gathered we reviewed Herman Sasse's essay, "The Church and the Political Powers of Our Time," as found in CPH's collection "One Lord, Two Kingdoms?" Our next retreat will be held on Feb 3-4, 2025, at St. Norbert Abbey in De Pere. Contact: the Rev'd Andrew Zoerb, STS, pastorandy@oursaviorsdenmark.org.

The Rev'd Andrew Zoerb, STS, dean

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.

From The Vicar

Worship is an encounter between the Triune God who created humans and the men and women who have heard his call. Therefore, it is a very personal event. We hear God speaking to us and we seek to respond in an appropriate way. St. Paul gives us guidance: "Be filled with the Spirit, addressing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody to the Lord with your heart, giving thanks always and for everything to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ." Ephesians 5:18b-20 Fair enough. But how do we put that into practice?

The Society of the Holy Trinity was founded because of a number of concerns about the teaching and practice of the faith developing in our various Lutheran denominations. One of them had to do with worship practices. From the Founding Statement on Parish Practice: "In the parishes we serve, we will seek to shape our exercise of the Ministry by catholic and confessional standards. Specifically we will . . . Preside at the Holy Communion leading the faithful according to the orders and texts of the church as provided in authorized books of worship." On Affirmations and Distinctions: "Concerning Right Order in the Church's Worship: When the gatherings of the faithful for prayer and worship are subject neither to catholic tradition nor authoritative church norms, when no order and no text is regarded as authoritative, then congregations are left to the preferences of pastors, the initiatives of publishing houses, or to popular fads. The worship of the Church becomes overly individualized, even chaotic; worship becomes subject to ideological manipulation, and the unity of the churches is injured. In the midst of such liturgical confusion, we commit ourselves to the common liturgy – to the orders and texts handed down by the Catholic Church of the West, received by the Lutheran reformers, and more recently by North American Lutherans." The Rule states how we commit ourselves to putting that into practice in our congregations.

That is all well and good. However, there many ways to put these principles into practice. Some pastors prefer beautiful vestments, highly symbolic actions, and incense. Some pastors prefer very casual attire and straightforward liturgies. Most are somewhere along the continuum. And then there are congregations. They fall along the same patterns. Of the tens of thousands of Lutheran pastors in North America, the STS represents a very small segment. Why is that? I love the Lutheran Book of Worship. I love organ and piano, and a cappella singing. Have I become too comfortable with these that I cannot appreciate the same historic liturgy in a different format? What does it mean to use "authorized books of worship"? Can we engage in conversation with orthodox pastors who use instruments and music other than our personal preference? To do so, we must be confident enough in the historic liturgy that we can recognize it under different forms. And we cannot fall into the trap of "younger people like this and older people like that." It is not about age. Nor is it about what I grew up with.

For the STS to remain vibrant and to attract a wider swath of pastors, we have to be wrestling with these questions. When the Leadership Council meets in February, we will be looking ahead to future Retreats. And we discuss items for the health of the STS and the good of the cause. If you have ideas regarding these questions, please share them with your Dean. You may also want to discuss them in your Chapter retreats.

The Rev'd Jim Lehmann, STS

Vicar

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