DE TRINITATE

Newsletter of the Society of the Holy Trinity

Societas Trinitatis Sanctae

From The Senior

All pastors who affix their name to the Rule first say, "Before God and my fellow pastors gathered here, and for the sake of the vows I spoke when I was ordained to the Holy Ministry, I hereby subscribe to the Rule of the Society of the Holy Trinity, asking the help of God and seeking the support of this Society." The gathered pastors respond, "Amen."

"Yes, it shall be so." We pray that each subscriber will earnestly work to live under authority of the triune God, in the Office of the Holy Ministry, for the sake of Christ's Church. We are thankful for each pastor who joins our ranks. Thanksgiving leads to duty. There is a responsibility on the part of those already subscribed. We commit ourselves to support one another.

What does that support look like? We are not a denomination. We are an ordered society of pastors, a ministerium. We are committed to "the catholic Faith as formulated in the canonical Scriptures and confessed in the ecumenical Creeds and Lutheran Confessions." (A Founding Statement). The concern about theological drift was observed in the various Lutheran synods, indeed, throughout many European and North American Christian denominations. It is the reason the Society was formed. During the past three decades, the challenges to orthodoxy have only grown deeper and wider. Support is more crucial than ever.

Decisions on how and where to faithfully serve Christ are varied. Currently 11 different Lutheran synods are represented in the STS. They represent perspectives which are often at odds with each other. We need not look far to find them. So what does it mean to be colleagues? Establishing a forum to evaluate those decisions, either officially or unofficially, either publicly or in semi-private groups, can easily tear at the fabric of the Society. Instead, we respect the decisions others have made and we commit ourselves to supporting each other in the circumstances where we serve. Sometimes a person may need to vent or lament what they see happening in their own setting. Support means that we listen with empathy and seek to encourage each other. Support means hearing confession and announcing forgiveness.

We are not a denomination. We are an ordered society of pastors, a ministerium.

The beauty of the STS is actually that we do come from different denominations. It is truly a pan-Lutheran ministerium working to renew the Church. We agree on the fundamentals of Scripture, Creeds, and Confessions. We agree that much of the current theology and practices, as outlined in the Founding Statement, are actually undermining the Faith. We seek to be faithful for new or returning generations of Christians. We are seeing a resurgence among young people who long for traditional liturgical worship and are tired of the moral laxity seen in society.

There is much to give us hope. The Lord of the Church will never abandon his Church. I look forward to continuing the work of those who have gone before us in the last 30 years of the STS and the last 20 centuries of the Church.

In Christ

The Rev'd Jim Lehmann, STS,

Senior of the Society

A Note of Thanks

My sisters and brothers. I will not take much of your time. But permit me a few words, halting as they are, to share with you my appreciation of the love and care you have shown since my initial diagnosis for Parkinson's and my subsequent stroke. I cannot thank you enough for ALL the prayers and the best wishes that descended upon me, and I do not doubt that those prayers for healing were enough to lead me even to address you today…it is, after all, only five months since the stroke.

You elected me to serve as Senior more than 10 years ago and it has been one of the honors of my life and ministry. I have loved this Society since the very beginning at that founding retreat and I have sought to carry that love in all I have done for those ten years. I have not pleased everyone in my tenure, but I have always put the good of our Society ahead of other considerations.

I could not have fulfilled this role, without the officers and deans that have been so supportive. I particularly want to thank Jay, Pari and Jim who have stepped in following my stroke. To all the other officers and deans who have served with me these ten years, I also give thanks.

And speaking of love, there is the apocryphal story of John the Beloved Disciple who was on his death bed. His disciples wished for a word of wisdom, a word of hope, a word of comfort from John before he died. But all he had to offer was this phrase "Love one other." But the disciples were not satisfied and begged him for more. But John kept repeating "Love one another. Love one another." We are a diverse group in this Society and, even though we all use the Lutheran label, we are still fractured by variations in ecclesiology and tradition. Therefore, it is even more imperative that we love one another. Our differences will remain. But we who are in this Society are called to strive for such love, even in the midst of our diversity.

And love the Rule. We are in an Abbey where the Rule of Benedict is dominant. That Rule is read at mealtimes, and other, occasions each and every day, so that the monks grow into the essence of the Rule. I have lived in community in my own Roman Catholic religious order, and I learned very quickly to know how the Rule becomes the very heart and soul of the community. Therefore, love the Rule of our Society. Read it, not only at retreats but daily, thereby making it a part of your very being.

I pray that God will bless the work of our Society and strengthen and preserve it as a gift to the Church of Jesus Christ. And I pray for you and all of our absent brothers and sisters. I quoted my favorite poet Tennyson in an earlier communication and a quote him now, "The old order changeth yielding place the new, least one good custom should corrupt that world." God, in his infinite wisdom, has said it is time for a new Senior in our Society and God knows best. But thank you for the privilege of serving these past 10 years. Thank you for the privilege of being able to care for this Society which I deeply love. May God bless you all.

In Christ,

The Rev'd Paddy Rooney, STS

Senior emeritus of the Society

From the Secretary

Dear friends,

The General Retreat in June at our new home of St. Meinrad's Archabbey welcomed 117 members, guests, and presenters. We elected a new Senior, Rev. Jim Lehmann, and four pastors subscribed to the Rule: Rev. Christine Wulff (Chesapeake-Potomac Chapter), Rev. Todd Cook (Carolinas Chapter), Rev. Chad Kyler (Upstate New York Chapter) and Rev. Daniel Volkmann (California Chapter). Welcome, new brothers and sister!

For 2027, the dates for the General Retreat are July 13-15. Registration will open April 22. As before, members and chapter guests, will register through their deans. At-Large members and guests and inquirers not affiliated with a chapter will register directly with me. Watch for more information on this the first quarter of 2027.

Dues are now due on Transfiguration Sunday. In 2027, that's February 7th. Your dean will send you a notice about them the end of November, and the form will also be on the website. The new system worked pretty well for 2026, and people were delightfully prompt at paying their dues, so I am hoping that will be the case for next year (and the year after, and the year after that….). Thanks to everyone who made the transition smoothly to the new dues timeline and our new retreat home!

In Christ,

The Rev'd Pari R. Bailey, STS

Secretary

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 notify our necrologist, The Rev'd Christopher Staley, STS, at cbstaley@netins.net with name, date of death, and chapter affiliation.

From the Vicar

It has been said that "there are no dumb questions." After 26 years of parish ministry, I can say that I often find myself doubting that statement. We ask questions in order to gain information we don't yet possess. We ask questions to learn or to put it more theologically, we ask questions as in faith we seek to understand. But what about when God asks a question? Is God who is all-knowing, seeking to understand? Can there be something that the Lord does not know?

There is another purpose to questions—teaching. When we teach, we often ask questions to which we already know the answer. Our motive is to help the learner to think critically about something.

The very first time God asks a question is to Adam and Eve (Genesis 3:9). After they eat the forbidden fruit and realize they are naked, our first parents hid from God. The Lord calls out to Adam asking "Where are you?" For whom is this question? Certainly, it is not for God, since he knows where Adam is and he knows why he is hiding. The question is for Adam, for it is a merciful teaching moment. The Lord is inspiring confession.

Where are you?

The Rule of the Society of the Holy Trinity commits us to the practice of Individual Confession and Absolution, not just for people in the congregations we serve, but for us pastors.

At this past General Chapter Retreat, we had the opportunity to hear some great teaching and consider the practice of Individual Confession. It is an ancient practice that is unfamiliar to most Lutherans and one that seems to be less popular even among most Roman Catholics today. It is a gift of our Lutheran heritage that many of us have forgotten we possess, tucked away and hidden in our worship books.

The Rule of the Society of the Holy Trinity, with Luther, understands Confession and Absolution's value and seeks to renew its use in the Church. Article XI of the Augsburg Confession states: "It is taught among us that private absolution should be retained and not allowed to fall into disuse…" Those of us who have been practicing it, encouraging it, and offering it, must not forget to teach and encourage our younger members who may not be as familiar with it.

I would therefore encourage our chapters to not only offer the opportunity at retreats, but also to support, encourage and teach one another in implementing, growing and sustaining the practice. After all, it is for the sake of proclaiming the Word of God. "…the people are carefully instructed concerning the consolation of the Word of absolution so that they may esteem absolution as a great and precious thing. It is not the voice or word of the man who speaks it, but it is the Word of God, who forgives sin, for it is spoken in God's stead and by God's command." (Augsburg Confession, Article XXV)

Confession and Forgiveness is a means of grace.

Consider Peter's encounter with the risen Jesus on the shore of the lake. Jesus poses the same question three times "Do you love me?" At one point Peter feels hurt and says, "Yes Lord, you know, I love you." These questions were not meant to hurt Peter, but to strengthen him, for when faced with the remembrance of his denial, the Lord met him with mercy and task of nurturing the flock. Like Peter, you and I have been called to announce the joyful news of God's forgiveness, and like Peter, we need to hear it too.

Individual Confession and Absolution… it is like treasure hidden in a field… a pearl of great value.

In obedience to the Gospel,

The Rev'd A.J. Domines, STS

Vicar

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