DE TRINITATE

Newsletter of the Society of the Holy Trinity
Societas Trinitatis Sanctae

From The Senior

With a full agenda before them, but facing some unseasonably cool temperatures for the south, the Deans and Officers of the Society gathered in February for our annual Leadership Council in Charleston, South Carolina. Some Deans and officers were not able to attend personally but did join us on zoom for all the business sessions.

It was a very productive gathering, and I will seek to provide a summary of the issues addressed and the actions taken. It is good for us to remember that the Leadership Council serves as a forum for reflection on issues facing our Society but also as the Governing body of our corporation. Therefore, at one point in our session, we acted in our role as the Board of Directors and passed a budget and received the IRS 990 which had been filed. The Board also asked the Bursar to review the By-laws to determine whether we could or should change our fiscal year (currently July 1 to June 30). Finally, the Board approved a transfer of funds from our investment account to cover the projected shortfall due to the fact that there would be two General Chapters in one fiscal year given our change of schedule in 2026 and the income would not match expenditures for a period of time.

Other issues considered and actions taken by the Leadership Council were as follows:

1. Most of our chapters are doing well but a couple are struggling. The chapter located in Oregon was no longer functional and Council approved for it to be disbanded. That leaves us with 18 chapters in the US and Canada.

2. Given the change in dates for our General Chapter retreats in 2026 and 2027, our Secretary proposed a new schedule of dates for dues and registration for General Chapter. That revised schedule has been sent to the Deans for distribution to their members. One significant issue is that the new schedule would call for the payment of two sets of dues in one year. The Council recognized this could prove to be a hardship for some of our members and, if it is, they should discuss the issue with their deans so that we can resolve it.

3. Our new web site is now up and running (go and check it out) but we want it to reflect as much up to date information as possible. It was agreed that we would establish a quarterly update to the site in conjunction with a new schedule for De Trinitate.

4. It was also agreed that we would seek to make De Trinitate more of a reflective journal rather than simply a mechanism for chapter information. Look for those changes over the next few months.

5. A portion of our membership is aging or dealing with various forms of physical challenges. One of our members has offered to start an "electronic chapter" just for such members. We are hopeful that St. Meinrad will allow us to live stream sessions of our General Chapter, which St. Mary could not do. But the question remains as to what benefit such an electronic chapter would bring. Praying together is one possibility, but it was agreed that such a group as this could not constitute a chapter as defined by the Rule. Hence it was agreed that we seek to establish an "online oratory" with care for aging or infirm members remaining with the chapters to which that individual is a member.

We are hopeful that St. Meinrad will allow us to live stream sessions of our General Chapter, which St. Mary could not do.

Meanwhile Deans will look at their chapter roster to see who might be interested in being part of such a group.

6. Given that General Chapter is moving to the summer months, there was discussion about whether we should also move Leadership Council. It was agreed that Leadership would meet via zoom in February 2026 to conduct the business of the corporation; and then meet again in person in September of 2026.

7. A proposal has been made that the Society produce a series of videos for the purpose of teaching worship leadership. The concern centers on the belief that our seminaries are not doing this well and that some pastors are deficient in this area. It was originally the desire of one of our major ecclesial bodies to work with us on this project, but that idea was not accepted out of concern that it violated our very nature as a pan-Lutheran body. However, it was agreed that we move ahead with the project solely as the Society which would then in turn make these resources available to our members and any ecclesial body which wished to use them. Funding would come from the estate funds that were left to us by one of our deceased members. A working group has been put together and a framework will be established shortly. It is important to emphasize that this is not to push what some might believe to be the "right way" to lead liturgy but rather to emphasize the principles of sound worship leadership.

8. The last General Chapter (2024) was reviewed and the plans for the upcoming General Chapter were discussed. Our theme for 2025 will be "Nicaea at 1700 – An Ecumenical Conversation" with three speakers – a Roman Catholic, an Orthodox and a Lutheran. This will be our last gathering at St. Mary of the Lake. No special recognition is planned.

9. We also looked at the upcoming General Chapters in 2026 and 2027 to be held at St. Meinrad. We are exploring a theme of Confession and Absolution in practice as well as theology for 2026; and the centrality of the Rule for 2027. Speakers have not yet been established. 2027 will also be the 30th anniversary of the founding of the Society and, as we have done every five years, we will have some special events to commemorate this milestone.

10. There was a substantial discussion around the understanding of consensus in the life of our Society today. This principle has been central to our identity since our founding, but it was felt that we have not spoken or taught enough about it over recent years. And yet consensus is central to the election process for both Senior and Deans as well as our decision-making process. There was also a re-examination of what we mean by a "pure ecclesiastical ballot, how Deans and the Senior discern that it is time for new leadership and whether one can say "no" to consideration for election to an office. The election process itself was also discussed and what instructions need to be given as we move forward. And what happens if we get to Thursday morning of the retreat but there is no election. We still have time before the next election to resolve some of the election issues, but we will go ahead and be more intentional about establishing a more common understanding of consensus.

11. Finally, we discussed the aging of the membership in the Society and how we can intentionally raise up some of our younger members for future leadership.

So, you can see that we covered a lot of ground at Leadership, and I am grateful for all the input of both Deans and Officers who give so much to sustain our Society. Please keep them all in your prayers.

And keep in prayer the chapters who will be holding elections for Dean over the next few weeks – Metro NY; Upstate NY; Minnesota, Rocky Mountain; California and Iowa.

In Christ

The Rev'd Paddy Rooney, STS Senior.

From The Secretary

Dear brothers and sisters, This year is our last for the General Chapter Retreat at University of St. Mary of the Lake in Mundelein, IL. In 2026, we will move to our new home of St. Meinrad Archabbey in southern Indiana (closest airport is Louisville, KY; note that you will still be responsible for getting yourself from the airport to the retreat). We will also be moving the General Retreat to the summer.

Accordingly, the schedule for payment of dues and registering for the 2026 retreat is changing. Going forward, dues will be due on Transfiguration Sunday instead of Holy Trinity Sunday. I know that this means that you won't have a full twelve months before needing to pay dues again, and if this is a hardship for you, or you need to adjust the timeline, contact me. I've put together a list of dates that are important. Please mark these down:

2025

Bright Week (Week of April 21): Dues info emailed to the deans to forward, forms live on website
June 15, 2025 (Holy Trinity Sunday): Dues are due
June 23, 2025: General Chapter registration info emailed to deans
July 7, 2025: General Chapter registration opens
August 29, 2025: General Chapter registration closes
September 5, 2025: Deadline for cancellation for the General Chapter
September 23-25, 2025: General Chapter Retreat, USML Mundelein, IL
November 30, 2025 (St. Andrew): Dues info emailed to the deans to forward, forms live on website

2026

February 15, 2026 (Transfiguration Sunday): Dues are due
March 16, 2026: General Chapter registration info emailed to deans
April 1, 2026: General Chapter registration opens (NB: during Holy Week)
May 31, 2026: General chapter registration closes
June 5, 2026: Deadline for cancellation for the General Chapter
June 16-18, 2026: General Chapter at St. Meinrad Archabbey in St. Meinrad, Indiana
September 29-October 1: Leadership Council, Seabrook Island, SC
November 30, 2026 (St. Andrew): Dues info emailed to deans to forward, forms live on website

2027

February 7, 2027 (Transfiguration Sunday): Dues are due
April 5, 2027: General Chapter registration info emailed to deans
April 23, 2027: General Chapter registration opens
June 21, 2027: General chapter registration closes
June 27, 2027: Deadline for cancellation for the General Chapter
July 13-15, 2027: General Chapter at St. Meinrad Archabbey in St. Meinrad, Indiana
November 30, 2027 (St. Andrew): Dues info emailed to deans to forward, forms live on website

No doubt, there will be some confusion but I'm hoping it will be minimal. If you have questions, please contact me or another officer.

The Rev'd Pari Bailey, STS

Secretary

Chapter Updates

California Chapter

California chapter is gathering for an Easter retreat May 19-21 at St. Andrew's Abbey in Valyermo, California. the Rev'd Richard Johnson, STS will be the teaching theologian presenting on Nicaea at 1700, and he will serve as official observer for the senior as a dean is elected.

Carolinas Chapter

The Lent Retreat was held 10-11 March at the Catholic Conference Center, Hickory, NC. The Rev'd Andrew Weisner, STS, taught us on another Mark of the Church - "Confession and Forgiveness." For nearly five hours he led us through the biblical writings, the early Church, Roman Catholic and Orthodox traditions, concluding in the Lutheran understandings and practices. Because of the discussion we are planning to re-shape our private confession practice, starting with the Easter Retreat.

The Easter Retreat is set for 12-13 May and the Advent Retreat for 01-02 December.

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

Chesapeake-Potomac Chapter

The Chesapeake-Potomac Chapter held its Advent Retreat December 2-3, 2024, at the Claggett Center, Adamstown, Maryland with 13 attendees. Led by the Dean, The Rev'd Rod L Ronneberg, STS, the Chapter explored Liturgies connected to the Nativity of Our Lord.

The Chapter met again for a pre-Lenten Day Retreat on February 24, 2025, at St Paul's Church, Fulton, Maryland, with 7 in attendance. Resources were shared regarding Holy Week, with emphasis on the Triduum.

The Post-Easter Retreat is scheduled in May, 2025, again at the Claggett Center, the dates to be determined. Dr Carl Roemer, STS, will make a presentation on the Shroud of Turin.

The Rev'd Rod L Ronneberg, STS, Dean

Central Plains Chapter

The Central Plains Chapter will meet in a 44 hour retreat from Monday, April 28-30. Details will be forthcoming shortly to chapter members and visitors.

The Rev'd Jeff Cottingham, STS, Dean

Florida Chapter

Thirty one of us gathered at San Pedro Conference Center Monday 17 March through Tuesday 18 March. The Rev'd Dr. Nathan Howard Yoder STS presented on "The Evangelical Catholic Approach To the Doctrine of the Ministry" with responses by The Rev'd Senior Patrick Rooney, STS, The Rev'd William Wiecher, STS, The Rev'd Rodney Eberhardt+ STS, and the Rev'd David Charlton, STS. We meet again June 16 - 17 when Reverend Dr. John Eric Hurtgen, Dean, School of Theology; Campbellsville University will present "The Society for the Holy Trinity in the Pastoral Letters: God the Father, God the Son, God the Spirit,. And Your Household."

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

Susquehanna Chapter

The Susquehanna Chapter met for a Lenten Day Retreat at Zion Lutheran Church in Harrisburg on Monday, March 10.

An Easter Retreat will be held at Bethany Retreat Center in Frenchville, PA April 28-30. Bishop Matthew Riegle will be the guest teacher in the topic of the Council of Nicaea.

The Rev'd Albert Domines, STS, Dean

Three-Chapter Retreat

A multi-chapter Retreat (Indiana, Northern Illinois , Great Rivers & Susquehanna) is planned for May 5 - 7 at the Maria Stein Retreat Center in Ohio. For further information contact The Rev'd Norman Dew, STS, Dean of the Indiana Chapter.

The Rev'd Keith Forni, STS, Dean, Northern Illinois Chapter

Wisconsin Chapter

The Wisconsin Chapter was in retreat on February 3-4, 2025 at St. Norbert Abbey in De Pere, WI. The Rev. Tim Duesenberg led us in a study of 1 Corinthians 11:2-16. Our next retreat will be held on April 28-29, 2025, at St. Anthony Spirituality Center in Marathon, WI. Contact: Rev'd Andrew Zoerb, STS, pastorandy@oursaviorsdenmark.org.

The Rev'd Andrew Zoerb, STS, Dean

From The Vicar

In the Apostles' Creed we confess "I believe in . . . the holy catholic Church". In case we are not certain what is meant, the Nicene Creed states: "We believe in one holy catholic and apostolic Church". These few words describe so much – too much for this brief article. But consider this one point. Why can we believe in the Church? It is made up of flawed people, organized or disorganized in so many forms; sometimes drawing people to deeper faith and sometimes becoming a hindrance to faith. Why not simply believe in Jesus and then, by extension, the Holy Trinity?

We believe in the Church because it is the body of Christ of which he is the head. And the Church is incarnational, made up of real people. "And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God." (Ephesians 4) In most cases, pastors are called to serve congregations. Yes, some are bishops, others serve on staffs, others teach in higher education, others are chaplains. However, the primary place for ordained pastors is in congregations. That is a very good thing. The faithful need someone to lead and guide them in their journey of being disciples of Christ. That relationship can grow into a beautiful thing. "This is my pastor." "This is my congregation."

Yet this can become a hazard. "This is my pastor. I want her here at all times, for all situations." "This is my congregation. I don't need to be involved in anything else. I can do it myself without any outside interference." What a narrow view of the one holy catholic and apostolic Church! How isolating that becomes!
From Chapter VI of the Rule of the Society of the Holy Trinity we have a larger view of the Church. "2. We will seek to gather with fellow pastors both within and outside of our Society, both within and without the Lutheran confessional family, to encourage their study, teach them what we have learned and be taught by their learning." We are enriched in our understanding and practice of the Christian faith when we hear a broader range of perspectives. Also, in the Society, we also know that the Church did not start and end with Martin Luther. Again from Chapter VI of the Rule: "3. In this study and reflection we will make use of the Councils, Fathers and Doctors of the Church, and the Sixteenth Century Reformers and their Confessions." Rather than isolation, we experience the breadth and fellowship of the Church.

In our time, in a society which is growing further apart and a Church that expresses greater divisions, it is easy circle the wagons. It is tempting to stay inside the echo chamber where everyone expresses the same opinions. It is simple to just stay put. But that is much to narrow. With all of its foibles, we still believe in the Church! And then the Church calls. A need is discovered. The body of Christ needs building up. Who will go? Here am I. Send me.

The Rev'd Jim Lehmann, STS
Vicar

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News and Reflection from the Society of the Holy Trinity
Volume 28, Number 1, Lent, 2025
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