

A WORD FROM THE EDITOR

This issue of the NAAC Newsletter looks back as well as forward. We review and reflect on the 2011 NAAC Gathering in San Francisco. The wind we felt off of the Pacific was not only the ocean breezes but also the Breath of God providing life and vigor to our catechumenal ministries. Secondly, we look forward to the "Regional Training Institutes" in 2012. Currently we have these scheduled for the East, Midwest, and West. (See related article.) Our Board continues to work on (hopefully)

adding an institute in the north-west. This issue also includes an article by Paul Palumbo, pastor of Lake Chelan Lutheran Church in Washington. There is an illusion "out there" that says "you cannot do the catechumenate in a small town congregation. Paul testifies differently. Finally, I can't help but flag my own contribution to our efforts. See catechumenate-guyblog.org for reflections and discussions on our shared ministry. And please join in the conversation!



Eucharist at 2011 Gathering

Jerry Paré
Trinity Episcopal Cathedral
Sacramento

NAAC EMBARKS ON A HOPE-FILLED FUTURE

Some of us are still on a high from a wonderful gathering in San Francisco. One of the largest in attendance with around 60 participants, the conference included many new to NAAC and a number of younger members too. Worship and the presentations were stellar; and good fellowship and networking were enjoyed by all. We offered our gratitude to the Gathering Team led by Jerry Pare and Bryon Hansen with special thanks to Bev Piro who stepped in at the 11th hour as registrar and interim treasurer; and appreciation was expressed to Dan Benedict who provided another terrific line-up of workshops. The next NAAC gathering will be in June 2013 in the Minneapolis area, and will be a joint event in collaboration with the Associated Parishes

for Liturgy and Mission (APLM).

We welcomed three new Board members: Rev. Teresa Striklen, Associate Director of Worship for the Presbyterian Church USA; Devra Betts, a lay person who serves as Ministry Coordinator for Holy Spirit Lutheran Church in Las Vegas; and Elise Eslinger, a United Methodist lay person from Dayton, Ohio who is active in the church as a teacher and musician. All three are part of the Design Team for the 2012 Regional Training Institutes planned by NAAC.

The Board discussed exciting plans for the coming two years and noted that NAAC is living into the future envisioned in the new strategic plan adopted in June 2009. Officers were elected and assignments were

designated as follows: Rick Rouse (president), Sherman Hesselgrave (secretary), Devra Betts (treasurer), Elise Eslinger (membership director), Jay Koyle (ecumenical officer) assisted by Teresa Striklen who is also the board liaison to the joint APLM/NAAC Gathering Planning Team for 2012, Jerry Paré (newsletter editor), Martha Maier (Constant Contact and Monthly Enews), Georgie Leibowitz (Board recruitment), and Devra, Jay, Teresa, and Sherman (Fund Development Team).

Contact information of the Board is available on the website. Please feel free to contact any one of us if we can be of assistance.

Rick Rouse, President

THE CATECHUMENATE: DYING AND RISING IN CHRIST

This morning, an elderly woman lay dying. The nursing home requested that someone from the church come to pray for her and her family. When we arrived, we said the 23rd Psalm and marked the dying with the sign of the cross in a rite adapted from the Rite of Welcome. Finally, we sang the Nunc Dimittis and, just as we finished, she breathed her last. She died at peace surrounded by loving family and prayed home by people she had never met.

It is no surprise that this call came to our church. In small towns, somebody always knows somebody and we are known for walking alongside people. Folks from our congregation visit the nursing home regularly. We supply food for those in need, welcome veterans and their families as they re-enter civilian life, offer shelter

and support for those without a home.

And we practice the catechumenate. In the last four years, 35 people have journeyed through faith formation with our congregation. In the past 13 years, there have been so many that the pastor can't keep track anymore of who has entered the body by way of the catechumenate and who hasn't. What is clear, however, is that this is a body that is continually being trained to walk with others, and especially in times of difficulty. Of late we have had our share of difficult situations. Norma, a seventy-five year old woman full of joy, entered the catechumenal journey. Four months in she had a horrible fall and was in a coma for months. As she lay in the hospital, our catechist refused to let Norma off the hook. She was not going

to let Norma miss the prayers and shared Word just because she was in a coma! The catechist faithfully visited the hospital, reading scripture and praying. She brought others to the bedside to read and to pray. Eventually, Norma woke up. In a few short weeks her joy returned. Her speech and balance took a little longer. Finally, though, a year later than expected, Norma joined the Body of Christ in our community. It was a delightful celebration, an amazing journey, and a beautiful example of accompaniment.

Because our congregation practices the catechumenate, it is perpetually training for the kind of accompaniment that a dying world needs.

Paul Palumbo
Pastor of Lake Chelan Lutheran

MASTERMIND EVENT



Devra Betts is Ministry Coordinator at Holy Spirit Lutheran Church in Las Vegas. Holy Spirit brought five members of the Catechumenate Team to the Gathering. She writes: "These gatherings are of great value for those seeking to learn more about the catechumenate and for experienced practitioners. Because the catechumenate is a process, there is always something new that I learn to support and develop the process in our church. I love the opportunity to learn more from other practitioners about what works well in their setting. It is a great mastermind event!"

THE CATECHUMENATE AND A PERSONAL TESTIMONY

JoAnn Rash went through the catechumenal process, called "Journey of Faith" at St. Andrew Lutheran church in Vancouver, Washington. At "Come to the Water," a regional catechumenate training event held February 2011 at St. Andrew, she shared her experience. Here is her story:

Religion never played much of a role in my life while I was growing up. We only attended a Lutheran church a few times. Religion wasn't discussed unless there was a baptism, wedding, or funeral. My mother and her family were Lutheran. My father's side of the family practiced no religion. When my husband and I got married, we "borrowed" his cousin's Lutheran church and had a very beautiful wedding ceremony.

After our son, Jack was born, we decided to have him baptized. Although we lived thirty miles away at the time, we wanted him baptized in Vancouver since that's where my parents lived. I met with Pastor Jim and he performed the service here at St. Andrew. We were very happy with the service and then after our twins were born I met with Pastor Jim again. We were now living in Vancouver, and we were looking forward to having the twins baptized at St. Andrew. I recall Pastor Jim asking me why I wanted to baptize the twins. I told him that it was important to my mom. Through our conversation, however, I realized that baptizing our children was also important to me. But I didn't really know why.

We started attending St. Andrew not long after my visit with Pastor Jim. Sometimes we came as a family, but when my husband, Dan, started working Sundays, it was just Jack and me. We would quietly slide

into one of the back rows and then quietly sneak out. That all changed when Jack started asking to sit up front. This meant we couldn't hide anymore. A few months later we celebrated the twins' baptisms.

The following year I decided that I wanted Jack and me to attend Sunday services and for Jack to attend Sunday school on a regular basis. I had read about "Journey of Faith" in the bulletins and thought it would be a good idea. Since I had no idea what I was doing, I wasn't sure what it involved. Not knowing what I was going to be getting myself into was a little scary.

As it turned out, Jack was not ready for me to leave him alone in Sunday School. I spent the first few Sundays that fall helping him get more comfortable. Every Sunday I would slowly work my way further and further out the door until one day he was finally okay without me there.

One Sunday as I was pondering what to do with myself while Jack was in Sunday School, I saw the "Journey of Faith" group walk by. They were taking a tour of the church. As they passed, I literally jumped in and asked if I could join them. I was welcomed along.

"Journey of Faith" was not at all what I had expected. We learned about the Lutheran faith and the history of St. Andrew. We shared and prayed and learned about each other. More importantly, we learned about ourselves and not only where we are in our faith journey, but in my case, that I was actually even on a journey. Before I joined the group I believed that once I finished "Journey of Faith" my journey would be over. What I learned was that my journey is just beginning. The fact that I don't have

to know everything in order to be a member and part of the St. Andrew family was a huge revelation to me. I think that the best part of "Journey of Faith" is the connections that are made between the people involved. I built relationships with my fellow journeyers as we shared our lives together and friendships began to form. It was nice to be able to walk through the church and say, "Hey, I know you!"

The most valuable connection that I made was with my faith partner (also known as sponsor). I love my faith partner. It's comforting to know that I am not alone in my journey and I can share my thoughts, concerns, and questions with her. More importantly, though, I get to share the exciting stuff with her such as when something really clicks with me and I have one of those "oh, I so get this now," moments. These are the best to share! The great thing is that it's not just a one-way relationship. My faith partner's willingness to share her journey with me is both inspiring and exciting.

Shortly after attending the Easter Vigil and still a little surprised that I didn't have to have it all figured out, I spoke with another mother with young twins who was going to be joining "Journey of Faith." She seemed to be a bit apprehensive about the process. I told her that she would be very glad that she too became a part of this "Journey of Faith."



NAAC TO OFFER REGIONAL TRAINING INSTITUTES IN 2012

“GO, BAPTIZE, MAKE DISCIPLES” is a new training institute for pastors, worship leaders, and educators (e.g. directors of spiritual formation) being offered in 2012 in three regions of the country: the West— Phoenix, the East — Baltimore, and Midwest — Minneapolis. These events are for both experienced practitioners and those new to the catechumenate.

As congregations seek to find ways to train and equip believers to live a life of discipleship, the catechumenate —an ancient/future process of faith formation and baptismal living practiced by Christians for centuries—is being reclaimed by today’s church. You

are invited to bring a team from your congregation to explore this gift of the early church and how to introduce it to your faith community. A new, ecumenical congregational resource manual on the catechumenate soon to be published by Augsburg Fortress will be introduced at the events and copies provided to all participants.

Choose from three beautiful locations: Spirit in the Desert Conference Center in Carefree, AZ (Feb. 24-26), Bon Secours Spiritual Center near Baltimore, MD (April 13-15), or The Oak Ridge Conference Hotel near Minneapolis, MN (May 18-20). Music at all three

venues will be provided by Bread for the Journey.

These three training institutes are offered by the North American Association for the Catechumenate (NAAC), an ecumenical organization serving mainline Protestant congregations in the US and Canada. It is made possible by a worship renewal grant from the Calvin Institute for Christian Worship with funds provided by the Lily Endowment Inc.

For more information contact Pastor Rick Rouse, the Project Director at rwrouse@comcast.net (612-710-7959) or Devra Betts, the Institutes Registrar at devra@holyspiritlc.org

AN INVITATION

AN INVITATION FOR MEMBERSHIP IN NAAC

This summer NAAC held a very successful annual gathering at the Mercy Center in the San Francisco area. Several first-time attendees indicated they left inspired and encouraged for their ministry of making disciples. If you were not able to be with us for this event, we would like to invite you to renew your membership with us for the 2011-12 membership year that runs September thru August. We now offer four categories of membership including a congregational membership that covers ALL your catechumenal team for only \$100. Other categories include: \$10 for student (under age 30) and retirees, \$45 for individual practitioners (lay or clergy), and \$500 for a lifetime membership.

You may now join or renew in one of two easy ways:

1. Fill out the membership application on our website and return with a check to Elise Eslinger, Membership Director, 1842 Ruskin Rd., Dayton, OH 45406. OR
2. Go online to our website at www.catechumenate.org and press on the membership button. You may fill out the membership application online and make payment with your credit card.

NAAC ON FACEBOOK

Join the NAAC FACEBOOK community! If you are on FACEBOOK, look us up and be part of our online community of ministry practitioners sharing ideas and questions with each other.

Be sure to “like” us so that you will automatically be notified when there is some interesting online discussion going on that you might want to get in on regarding discipleship and baptismal living.

COMING SOON: NAAC FACEBOOK PAGE

This page will feature “Conversations with Jessicah”. One of our 2011 gathering presenters, Dr. Jessicah Duckworth, has offered to share her blog on the NAAC Facebook page and invites your participation, your questions and comments.

This is an opportunity for you to stay connected with Jessicah and your fellow ministry practitioners.

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