

FROM ADOLESCENCE TO ADULthood: A BRIGHT FUTURE

Many of us are still basking in the glow of NAAC's Annual Gathering held in Marriotville, MD near Baltimore the last week of July. It was an amazing event that drew about sixty-five pastors and other disciples, many of them new to NAAC and eager to learn more about the Catechumenate and how faith practices lead to discipleship. For me, it was a bitter sweet time as I stepped down after seven years of service to the NAAC Board of Directors in the role of President. Tributes were shared as some expressed gratitude for how our organization has grown during my tenure from being a young adult to a mature, vibrant adult stage of life. Much of the credit goes to the incredible team of directors I have been privileged to work with.

The Board of Directors wisely chose Bev Piro (ELCA) to step into the role of president and selected Larry Ehren (Episcopal) to serve as vice president. Other officers continuing in their roles are Sherman Hesselgrave (Anglican) as Secre-



tary, and Devra Betts (ELCA) as treasurer. Other members of the board now include Teresa Eisenlohr (Presbyterian), Elise Eslinger (United Methodist), Martha Maier (ELCA), Charles Mantey (ELCA), Michael Marchal (Roman Catholic), and Greg Smith (Anglican). One can see that we have a very ecumenical and diverse Board in gender and lay/clergy.

Interest in the Catechumenate continues to grow as evidenced by both the enthusiasm of newcomers at our annual gathering and an increase in the number of congregations and denomina-

tional partners desiring training in this ancient/future faith formation process. NAAC looks forward to a bright future as the Board makes plans for serving the larger church in the months and years to come—lifting up a vision of baptismal living for all believers.

Thank you for the opportunity to partner with you in this exciting ministry. I now look forward to co-chairing the 2016 gathering team with Martha Maier. We hope you will join us next year in Albuquerque, New Mexico.

Yours in Christ's Joyful Service,
Rick Rouse, Outgoing president

THANK YOU, RICK ROUSE!

Rick Rouse ended his seven year term as President of NAAC at the 2015 Annual Gathering. Under Rick's leadership NAAC grew from a fledgling organization to an organization guided by a Strategic

Plan and a solid working Board of Directors. The NAAC website and social media presence were expanded and regular communication devices such as this newsletter and monthly Enews were sent

like clockwork to members of an expanded email list. All this is in addition to robust annual Gatherings, introductory catechumenate training institutes and the publi-

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TRAINING INSTITUTE WAS TRANSFORMATIONAL

Andre Briscoe was a student at Wesley Seminary in Washington, DC when he chose to attend a Catechumenate Training Institute held at the Bon Secours Spirituality Center outside of Baltimore. He was in the process of discerning his call and which track to choose in the United Methodist Church: whether to be ordained for service as a Deacon or for word and sacrament ministry as an Elder. He claims that three days at the NAAC training event amounted to a Watershed Moment for him.

"It was really a God moment for me," Andre reports. "During those three days in the Spring of 2012, I experienced God's transforming grace in a very tangible way. It was unlike anything I had been exposed to, as I gathered with others around powerful worship, scripture and prayer."

Andre explained that his brief immersion into this faith formation journey helped him better understand the importance of his baptism. He was able to see more clearly where God was leading him and to reclaim God's baptis-



mal calling in his life and ministry. Andre is now a pastor of an inner city church in Baltimore and is planning to introduce the Catechumenate to his congregation in the fall.

Seminarians, pastors, and other church leaders are invited to "taste" the Catechumenate in the same three day immersion experience being held Oct. 1-3 at St. Johns Lutheran Church in Sacramento, CA. This Catechumenate Training Institute is sponsored by the North American Association for the Catechumenate (NAAC) and is being co-hosted by Trinity

Cathedral of Sacramento and the Episcopal Church of St. Martins. Registration is \$185 per person that covers program, materials, and all meals. Discounted lodging available at the nearby Hyatt Regency Hotel in Sacramento until Sept. 15. For more information and to register online go to the NAAC website at www.catechumenate.org You may also contact registrar, Devra Betts, at devrabetts@gmail.com

In the photo, Andre Briscoe visits with Beth Lewis of Augsburg Fortress at the Baltimore NAAC Gathering in July.

FEATURED RESOURCES

Washed and Welcome is a vibrant series of resources to support pastors, parents, and sponsors as they prepare for the sacrament of Holy Baptism. In addition, *Washed and Welcome* provides practical helps and ideas for parents and sponsors, as well as content and ideas to engage the entire assembly.

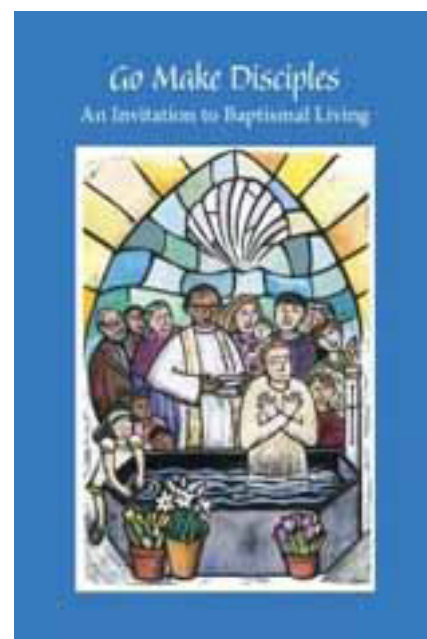
Go Make Disciples: An Invitation to Baptismal Living is an ecumenical handbook offering a basic "how to" and a collection of updated resources for preparing

adults for baptism or affirmation of baptism.

Go Make Disciples CD-ROM. A companion to the handbook *Go Make Disciples: An Invitation to Baptismal Living*. Contains supplemental resources and reproducible materials for congregations.

Welcome, Child of God, written by Anne Ylvisaker and illustrated by Claudia McGehee, is a beautiful board book featuring illustrations that help children connect

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REMEMBER YOUR BAPTISM AND BE THANKFUL!

Bon Secours Retreat and Conference Center near Baltimore provided a hospitable, beautiful, park-like setting for GATHERING 2015, July 30-August 01. Sixty-five participants from over the US and Canada quickly became a congenial, thoughtful community. One workshop leader commented, "The Gathering was stimulating because of its diversity – in ages, in church background, in level of church involvement – and delightful in the camaraderie that developed."

Engaging each day in a renewing rhythm of worship, learning, exploration, conversation, and table fellowship – and walking around the pond gardens and fountains, or over fields and trails – evoked a lot of gratitude among those who gathered. Larry Ehrens, our new vice-president, elaborated:

"Although I have been involved in the Catechumenate for many years, I have been attending NAAC gatherings only the last few. One of the most hopeful and energizing aspects of this unique event and organization is experiencing a number of mainline Christian Churches coming together to nurture a very ancient Christian Initiation process in their own respective communities of faith. I think all of us are tired of Christian denominations going their own way. I find this just the opposite . . . a gathering of the Body of Christ renewing the process of Welcome and Discipleship from our common roots in the Ancient Church."

Dr. Paul Hoffman and Dr. Jessica Duckworth offered evoca-



Gathering Around the Font

tive plenary lectures, coupled with guided table group sharing and prayer. Hoffman's opening lecture, "A Baptismal Center for Parish Life" provided a theological foundation for much that followed. He offered a surprise – a reversal: "Christ has died, Christ has risen, Christ will come again" became End (death with Christ), Middle (lifelong journey in Christ), Beginning (eternal life with God in Christ).

Dr. Duckworth, in "Practicing Discipleship: What Makes Your Congregation Distinctive?" focused on hospitality at the core of congregational practice, essential for Christian community to thrive, grow, and serve. Table talk was rich and full of personal anecdotes and new insights. In the final lecture, "Worship that Forms a Community of Disciples," Hoffman offered an alternative form of the Lutheran rite for Renewal of the Baptismal Covenant, which expanded the number of voices in the circle around the font and brought personal and communal refreshment. The NAAC phrase, "living wet", became a reality in the Gathering, both in worship

and in learning.

Workshops offered a large variety of topics for both new and experienced catechumenal leaders, and excellent resources were made available in bookstore and display tables. This year a third, innovative workshop session invited participants to share their own distinct approaches, models, and learnings for one of the three stages: before, during and after the catechumenal process of formation toward discipleship. Bev Piro, our new president, who as part of the planning team had organized the workshop offerings, made this observation: "It was exciting to welcome so many catechumenate 'inquirers' and see them catch the vision of transformation from church member to disciple of Christ through the catechumenate process."

Worship included a beautiful

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REMEMBER YOUR BAPTISM AND BE THANKFUL!

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visual environment and rich musical proclamation and prayer, as well as powerful celebration of Word and Table. These communal times embraced and cradled the days spent together. One candlelit evening service offered opportunity for healing prayers and anointing, with music of the Taizé community. Social times in the evening demonstrated how congenial the Gathering's participants were, with conversation extending long and late for many. Even signature Chesapeake crab cakes were enjoyed one evening!

A highlight of the NAAC 2015 Gathering was the honoring of Rick Rouse. He is stepping down from seven years of outstanding service as president and executive director of the organization.

Evaluations of the event indicated deep appreciation for Bon Secours, for leaders, for the efforts of the planning team and Board, and for each other. The ecumenical gathering provided opportunity for cross-denominational reflection and biblical exploration as well as practical approaches toward the nurture of baptismal life, lifelong. It also ignited interest and passion for moving to next stages of catechu-

menal exploration and practice in congregations. One young United Methodist pastor accompanied by an active missional leader commented, "I learned a great deal and now the wheels are churning for moving forward here (In our congregation)." She also connected to another participant whose expertise and assistance she can engage as a mentor.

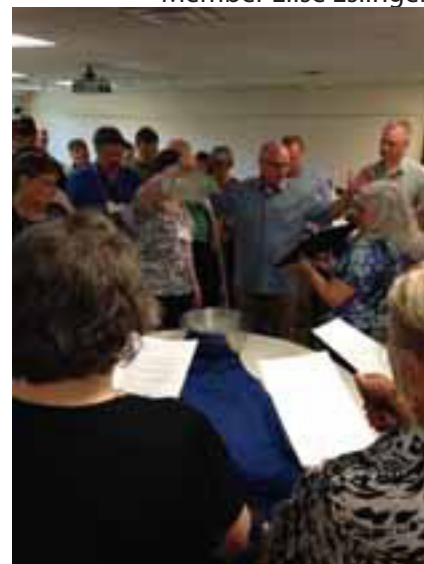
Another congregation sent six of its leaders to explore catechumenal ministry as a team, and expressed deep gratitude for the opportunity to clarify both the challenges and the opportunities which lay ahead, with many more resources to undergird their ministry discernment process toward engaging youth and adults.

A planning team leader, Lee Powers, summarized his thoughts about the Gathering in this way: "I became interested in the Catechumenate while retired, after reading books published by the Episcopal Church in the early 1990s. I wondered why I had never heard about this process from any of my colleagues in ministry. I soon learned about the North American Association for the Catechumenate. The information and encouragement I received from Rick Rouse led me

to register for the Annual Gathering, and to be part of the Planning Team. I contacted many Episcopal Dioceses and all of our Seminaries about this event. The experience of that three day gathering was exhilarating. It made me realize what an important ministry was missing from our common life in most Episcopal Churches. The dedication of the Board members is inspiring. I can't wait to get a team together to attend a training event. I've taken home a wealth of testimonies, teachings, and resources. I have new hope for the church."

To God be the glory!

A reflection by Planning Team
Member Elise Eslinger



Paul Hoffman invites people into "living wet"

A NOTE FROM THE EDITOR

Having just come from the annual gathering, there has been a great deal of material to include in this edition of the NAAC newsletter. Thank you to all the contributors. This newsletter will be published quarterly. Articles will be welcome for future editions. Par-

ticularly, short anecdotal articles about local practice and best practices of the catechumenate are needed. People are in search of good models to give flesh to the excitement that is generated at our annual Gathering. Also, short book reviews or reviews of other

resources helpful to those exploring the life of "Living Wet" would be welcome. You can submit articles up to a month prior to Nov. 30, Feb. 28, or May 31 to gsmit@uwo.ca. Accompanying photos are also great to have. With many thanks. Greg Smith

NEW MEXICO HERE WE COME IN JUNE 2016

“Sing a New Song: Unpacking the Mystery of Faith” is the theme of NAAC’s 2016 Gathering to be held in Albuquerque, New Mexico at the beautiful Bosque Center June 28-30, 2016. The event will feature three amazing scholars and published authors: Daniel Benedict, Lizette Larson-Miller, and Marty Haugen who will lead us in exploring in depth the four movements of the Catechumenate; and also provide music and worship resources for the rites.

This conference is designed to help pastors, musicians, lay leaders, and seminarians rediscover an ancient faith formation journey that leads to baptismal living. Participants will enjoy inspiring worship, practical workshops, excellent speakers, as well as the beauty of New Mexico’s landscape and culture. The incomparable Santa Fe arts community is only an hour’s drive, so plan to come early or stay later.

A limited number of scholarships are available for seminar-



Grounds of the Bosque Center

ians, first call pastors, and others who have special needs. Contact Devra Betts, Registrar, for more information at devrabetts@gmail.com or call 702-232-8383. Deadline for scholarship applications is May 1, 2016 which is also the deadline for the Early Bird registration discount that offers a savings of \$50 per person. Onsite housing is at a premium, so you will want

to register early. Off-site housing is also being arranged for those who register later. A downloadable brochure, online registration and other information is available on the NAAC website at www.catechumenate.org. Co-chairs of the 2016 Planning Team are Martha Maier and Rick Rouse.

FEATURED RESOURCES

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to their baptism and reinforcing the baptismal connections that surround us everyday.

Washed and Welcome Living the Promises of Baptism: 101 Ideas for Parents. This small book is filled with concrete ideas for celebrating with your children the gifts of baptism in daily living.

Washed and Welcome: A Baptism Sourcebook (with CD-ROM) by Clint Schnekloth (Author). This book is a practical theological resource to help pastors walk

parents and sponsors through the various parts of baptism. The book includes reproducible pages for parents and sponsors, session options, resource lists, practical helps related to a congregation’s total baptismal ministry, handouts, bulletin inserts, and more.

In Canada available at <http://store.afcanada.com/store/productfamily/120/Washed-and-Welcome>

In USA available at <http://store.augsburgfortress.org/store/productfamily/120/Washed-and-Welcome?c=285662>



MORE TESTIMONIAL COMMENTS ON NAAC GATHERING 2015

"The Gathering at Bon Secours for me was uplifting, enlightening, encouraging and renewing. The music for worship was inspired in the literal sense of what that word means: in the spirit or infused with and by the spirit. The speakers both challenged and equipped me. It was a joy to share with newbies the practices we have tried. Two nagging questions remain: why the bleep aren't more churches doing the catechuminate and why aren't more bishops and their staff members on board with this concept which is such a sound and solid on ramp for the into the church's life and mission? God is at work reviving this ancient practice. It was a delight to be with kindred spirits getting

on board with what God is up to." Dana Runestad ELCA Washington, D.C.

"The gathering at Bon Secours was like cool water to a thirsty soul and refreshing rain to parched land. The worship was purely grace-filled, the speakers and preachers both challenging and uplifting, and the conversations both in workshop and at the tables replete with encouragement and new ideas for our shared journeys." Dawn Henderson, ACC Huntsville, ON

"I resonated with Paul Hoffman's analogy about racism – the Emancipation Proclamation dealt with a symptom but not the problem – racial equality. We are a people suffering from chronic ill-

ness on many issues and through daily prayer and mediation we can attempt to become whole through the Spirit." Tina George-son ELCA, Seattle, WA

"I loved being with my sisters and brothers in faith, as we step out together to risk new ways of engaging those who wish to embrace a life of faith. I found the questions John Hill presented with his materials - used to follow scripture readings in the small groups -challenging and thrilling: 1. What is Jesus offering you? To us? To the World? 2. What is your resistance to what Jesus is offering? 3. What would you have to learn to risk, or renounce, to accept what Jesus is offering?" Donna Linn, ELCA Seattle, WA



BEV PIRO ELECTED NAAC PRESIDENT

The Board elected Bev Piro to succeed Rick as President. Bev served on the NAAC Board for a number of years and has over 20 years of congregational catechumenate experience. Bev is currently serving as Interim Pastor at St. Andrew Lutheran Church, Arvada, Colorado (suburban Denver). The first order of business will be a Board Retreat and Visioning meeting in Denver in late September. The Strategic Plan will be reviewed and revised in order to set a direc-

tion for the next several years. Larry Ehren was elected Vice President and will work closely with Bev to lead NAAC into the next phase of the organization's life. Board members Jesssica Duckworth and Jerry Pare ended their commitment to the Board for personal reasons. New Board members are Charles Manthey and Michael Marchal. Welcome one and all.

The new NAAC board executive was welcomed by outgoing pres-



ident Rick Rouse at the annual gathering and Bev Piro and Larry Ehren were blessed and prayed for at the closing Eucharist.

THANK YOU, RICK ROUSE!



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ation of *Go Make Disciples*.

We are grateful for Rick's dedicated and very effective leadership. Rick will continue in an advisory capacity as Immediate Past President and NAAC Ambassador for an additional year.

Rick was honored at the final reception of the annual gathering

in August. This included a themed cake, a testimonial written "tongue in cheek" and with great affection by Teresa Stricklen Eisenlohr, and the presentation of two crosses for Rick's collection.



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