



Center for Worship Resourcing
The General Board of Discipleship
Compiled and edited by Daniel Benedict

In this news letter:

- Living the Journey
- Events: Still time to register for this summer's NAAC event in Niagara Falls
- Easter Vigil as Holy Play—A recollection of the service of readings in Oregon
- Invitation to Discussion
- Recommended Books on Christian Initiation
- Recommended Links
- Quotes

Living the Journey—Courage and the Seeds of Vision

Sometimes I am amazed at the courage of pastors and congregations in the face of enormous odds and the temptation to give up and give in. I am also amazed at the grace of God working through people who carry within them the seed of vision and hope. I am going to mention two by name: Patricia and Rody.

I first met Patricia about eight years ago at Ocean Grove, New Jersey. She and a colleague had come to participate in a regional "Making Disciples in the 21st Century" event sponsored by Drew Theological Seminary and The General Board of Discipleship. Patricia was aware of the catechumenal process and whole-heartedly embraced its place in the contemporary church. She invited me to come to the Florida Annual Conference to do a three-day event with church leaders there. The event went off well. There were folks from as far away as Vancouver BC. The Easter Vigil was a night of holy play! Some of the participants seemed ready to implement some aspects of the process—a service of welcome, application of mentoring to their confirmation groups, Easter Vigil, etc.

Then Patricia left her conference position and now serves on the faculty of Seattle Pacific University; the seeds of vision and courage went with her. In the fall of 2003 she called me almost breathless with excitement to say, "We've got a church in Seattle that is ready to go with this 'stuff'." She went on to tell me that the pastor and leaders of the Queen Anne United Methodist Church in Seattle had read *Come to the Waters* and were prepared to journey with those seeking love, belonging and God. No doubt she had planted the seeds of vision there, since most people don't just wake up and say, "Catechuminate! That's what we will do!"

I called the pastor and encouraged him in this step. I sent him some resources and thanked God.

Then this last May I traveled to Turner, Oregon to lead an ecumenical training event at the Aldersgate Conference Center (Free Methodist). Among the ELCA Lutherans and Episcopalians I met Rody. He was the only UM there, not counting me. It was obvious to me that Rody was a classy guy and a seasoned pastor. He told me of the situation at the Queen Anne church. It is located in the Queen Anne community of Seattle; an old church without parking. He told me of the near death experience of the church and of his accepting the challenge of seeing if the Spirit could breathe new life into the dry bones. Rody is committed to rich liturgical worship. He is leading the church to invest some of its reserves to radically renovate the worship space to accommodate such worship.

In the fall of 2003 they began the journey with ten persons seeking relationship with God and the faith community. At the Easter Vigil (the congregation's first) they baptized Roger, a new Christian, and the other nine renewed their baptismal vows. He emailed me and told me the Pentecost witness of these persons was even more exciting. (Look for details in the summer issue.)

A number of younger generations are participating in the congregation, but the verdict is still out: will the church be able to take root in this "None Zone" community? (This term means that the Pacific North West had the highest incidence of persons checking "none" for their religious preference in the 2000 US Census: for more on the *None Zone* go to <http://www.booksmatter.com/b0759106258.htm>.) Will the blend of contemporary music, renovated space, liturgical life and catechesis be fertile soil for an ancient-future congregation to thrive as a baptized and baptizing community? Will the Spirit breathe life anew in this place?

The more I talked with Rody, the more I felt myself praying and wanting to participate in some way in the courageous, gracious work of the Spirit in that place. I still find myself wondering and praying for Rody and QAUMC: Lord, listen to your children praying. Lord send your Spirit...

What is the Spirit doing in your place? May courage and the seeds of vision grow. May all your passions stir at the prospect of God's forming disciples in your setting. Thanks be to God.

Dan

Events

Still Time to Register

July 22-25 "Making Disciples the Way Jesus Did": 2004 Annual NAAC Gathering in Niagara Falls, Canada

The 2004 Gathering of the Association will take place July 22 — 25 at the Mount Carmel Spiritual Centre in Niagara Falls, Canada. Click [here](#) for information on the 2004 site at [Mount Carmel](#).



The keynote speaker will be John Hill, an Anglican priest and a prolific author on liturgy and on baptism and the catechumenate. Details on the theme and on the workshops to be offered are available at <http://www.catechumenate.org/main.cfm?sid=3>

The brochure and registration form are online at <http://www.catechumenate.org/gathering04.pdf>

The leadership for this event and the setting are outstanding. I hope to see you there. Bring a team of folk. Last year in Rochester MN an Episcopal Church from Texas came with a team of 7!

Come to the Waters II

United Seminary's The Center for Worship, Preaching and the Arts will offer a second J-term course will be held at Bergamo Retreat, January 2005. For more information contact the director, Richard Eslinger reslinger@united.edu.



Easter Vigil As Holy Play—file this away for next year

In the last twenty-five years I have probably participated in forty-five Easter Vigil services! How can that be you ask. Well, a standard feature of catechumenal process training events is to include modeling the rites of initiation including the Easter Vigil. High church, low church, in naves and in retreat conference rooms, at the beach and seminary chapels. One such service this last May will

stand out in my mind for years to come.

All the participants and leaders at “Come to the Waters” at the Oregon training event were asked to plan for one of the readings at the vigil. Four groups took assignments for the creation, flood, exodus and dry bones readings. Like “Outback” there were no rules, just freedom to create. The results were quite remarkable. I will describe two of them.

The flood reading: before the reading began all of the worshipers were given a small piece of paper with “snake” or “dog” or “hyena” on it and all were told to find their partner to make the pair. Then the reading began and “all the animals, two by two” were herded into the ark (an arrangement of sofas and chairs at the far end of the room). There was snorting, cavorting and lamenting aplenty. Forty days of rain and flooding raised the ark upon the waves. Then the raven was sent out and did not return. Then the dove went out (jumping from a sturdy chair) and came back. A second time the dove “flew” out (running out the door to a nearby tree, picking a leaf and came back with leaf in her mouth. Then she went again and did not return. Walla! The animals and Noah’s family went out of the ark, saved from the flood to inhabit the earth washed by the waters God’s judgment and mercy. I thought of a church that welcomes children and all persons of all mental and physical capacities: all could, if they have an inner child they can call forth, could enter into this drama in an imaginative kinetic way.

The other notable “reading” was an impromptu drama of the Exodus. The women were told that they were the Israelites. The men were assigned the role of the Egyptians. (A

little evocation of the competition of the genders.) The Red Sea was the table with the baptismal pool upon it and a pitcher of water. The reading proceeded with the crying out of Israel and Moses obediently stretching out his rod over the waters (bowl going right and pitcher going left). Israel, amazed at the grace of God, gleefully went “on dry ground” to the other side. Then, true to the story, the imperiled and heinous “horse and rider” were fell into the mire and rush of returning waters. One woman reflecting on the experience the next morning said that she saw in a fresh way how salvation sometimes—maybe always—involves a loss of life or sacrifice. Amidst the play and enactment of the Scriptures, there was a kind of second naiveté that opened hearts and minds to the deeper folds of the story.

For the creation narrative the responsible group took advantage of a quilted bedspread that had sun, moon, rivers, mountains, sky and animals. The group gathered flashlights and other items to give playful visual dimensions to the lengthy reading. None of the “skits” were elaborate. Each was playful, impromptu, evocative and participatory.

“What if” your congregation’s groups took assignments for enacting in skit fashion the vigil readings this coming year? You might have to move the “service of the word” to a space other than the sanctuary. You might find that, like the Ents in Lord of the Rings it takes a long time to tell “our story.” You might discover that story telling has not been so rich in a very long while.

Have You Lurked or Participated in the Christian Initiation Discussion Room Lately?

http://www.gbod.org/dm/dr_christian_initiation.asp

I would still like to encourage your participation in the discussion room. Share your questions. Tell us about something you tried or plan to try in the coming year. This discussion room has been hidden on the GBOD website and has had little traffic. I would like to invite those of you engaged in catechumenal ministries to take advantage of this room. It would help create an interactive community for us to explore ideas and reflect on practices.

News

I will be going to Australia, August 11-20, to work with the Uniting Church as they seek to find ways to implement the catechumenal process across their church. This is a major step for them. I am privileged to be part of this training for leaders. I invite your prayers for them and for me. More about this in the next newsletter.

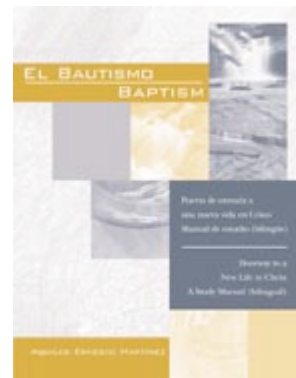
Recommended Books and Resources

Bautismo: puerta de entrada a una nueva vida en Cristo, El (bilingüe) Manual de estudio

Por Aquiles Ernesto Martínez

http://www.upperroom.org/bookstore/description.asp?item_id=155120

Through this bilingual study manual you will increase your understanding of the meaning of baptism in The United



Methodist Church. This resource includes the official United Methodist document on baptism adopted by the 1996 General Conference and a practical guide on the baptismal liturgy for Hispanic ministry. Ideal for individual and small group study, and for Sunday school classes. (Bilingual)

A través de este manual de estudio bilingüe, el lector podrá ampliar sus conocimientos sobre el significado del bautismo en la Iglesia Metodista Unida. Este recurso contiene además, el documento oficial de la Iglesia Metodista Unida sobre el bautismo, aprobado por la Conferencia General de 1996, y una guía práctica sobre el orden litúrgico del bautismo para los ministerios hispanos. Ideal para usarse en el estudio individual, grupos pequeños y en la escuela dominical. (2004)

Creative Preaching on the Sacraments by Lester Ruth and Craig Satterlee



http://www.upperroom.org/bookstore/description.asp?item_id=155122

This little volume is a practical resource for preachers all through the year, but its special niche is preaching at Easter and through the Great Fifty Days. Ruth and Satterlee are both steeped in the ancient practice of “mystagagical preaching” – preaching the mysteries. Here you will find solid help with unpacking the sacraments of initiation with an approach that the authors call “cosmic child’s play for real.”

Links

Church of the Apostles, Seattle WA: this Gen X congregation takes seriously the ancient-future way of making disciples. Home page:

<http://www.apostleschurch.org/home.php>. See “becoming Christian” at

http://www.apostleschurch.org/community_becoming.php, and “inviting others” for a simple articulation of their catechumenal perspective

The North American Association for the Catechumenate

<http://www.catechumenate.org/main.cfm?sid=1> continuously updates its website and offers catechumenal process leaders articles, workshop outlines, news of events and much more.

Quotes

Brother Frank Kacmarcik, O.S.B., liturgical design consultant and artist extraordinaire died February 22, 2004. In 1981 Don Saliers presented him with the Berakah award at the North American Academy for Liturgy with these inscribed words noting that his work “*embodies commitment to high standards, freedom from fads, conviction that tradition lives, and remarkable correspondence with the best insights of a Church in process of renewal.*” May such words be

said of our discipleship and leadership in the work of making disciples in the context of Christ's liturgy."

Brother Frank asked Thomas Merton's to create a prayer for vocations to the sacred arts and this is what Merton wrote:

O Lord, send us chosen messengers and teachers, lovers of worship and of art who will restore with chaste and noble works the beauty of your house! May they teach us to see with pure hearts the splendor of your Son Jesus Christ and to express what we have seen in images of so great a vision.

Cited from Worship (Spring 2004)

Clip art at the top from <http://www.sijcomputers.com/cruzblanca/hermanoleon/>

If you have stories, questions, pictures, quotes or other input for this news letter, please submit them to me. My contact information is:

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