

A HALLMARK YEAR FOR NAAC

The strong winds of Pentecost have been blowing through NAAC this year! Nearly sixty people have participated to date in our regional training events — held in Phoenix and Baltimore — with two more yet scheduled in Minneapolis (May) and Spokane (August). Most of those attending were new to the catechumenate and have come away from the events enriched in their own faith walk and excited about introducing this faith formation and disciple-making process in their congregations. NAAC members who haven't attended one of this year's training events should consider joining us in Spokane,

Washington, in August.

Another milestone for NAAC is the publishing in April of a new congregational handbook called *Go Make Disciples: An Invitation to Baptismal Living* that was a joint project of NAAC and Augsburg Fortress. Our special thanks go out to Suzanne Burke, a worship editor at Augsburg Fortress Publishers, who believed in the project and helped make it happen. I was privileged to serve as project manager and supervised eighteen authors representing most of the mainline denominations, most of them members of NAAC to produce the first truly ecumenical handbook on the catechumenate.

This new resource has received accolades from denominational leaders and scholars across North America, and already half of the first printing has been sold in just two weeks. An accompanying CD-ROM will be released this May that includes worship rites from most mainline denominations and other resources.

The Board will be losing one of our faithful members this summer. Georgia Leibowitz of Portland, OR has decided not to seek another term due to other commitments. She has served as chair of board recruitment for the past year; we are very grateful for her

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TESTIMONIAL ON A RECENT TRAINING INSTITUTE



The recent NAAC regional training institute at the Bon Secours in

Baltimore was a wonderful event. I had studied about the modern catechumenate movement when I was a student at Wesley Theological Seminary. However, the power of this weekend was hearing first-hand experiences, and then sampling the seasonal rites.

I was intrigued by the use of ritual at each of the church's seasons to gradually lead the pilgrimage of faith deeper into the body

of Christ.

My favorite memory of the weekend was the rite in which I participated. I acted as a sponsor during the Rite of Welcome. I was quite moved as I made the sign of the cross on a candidate's palms for service and on her shoulders for the yoke of Christ. She said that she was very moved by seeing me kneel to make the sign of

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All issues of *NAAC News* are available on the website and ready for downloading. The issues are available on the Resources page of the site. Items, articles for future issues, and ideas for the newsletter should be forwarded to the editor. We welcome contributors and writers.

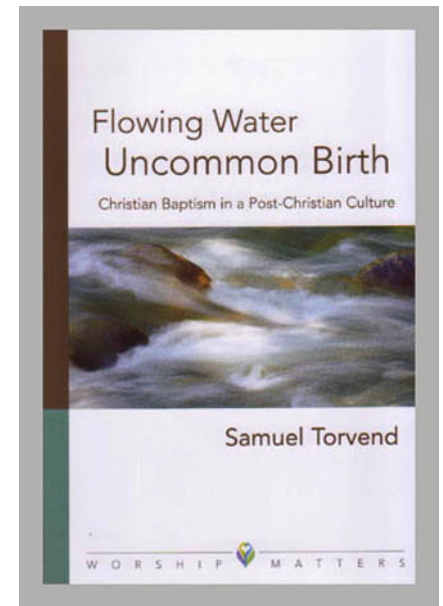
FLOWING WATER, UNCOMMON BIRTH: A BOOK REVIEW . . .

Christian sacraments are rich and multi-textured. They cannot be reduced to a single meaning. In *Flowing Water, Uncommon Birth*, Samuel Torvend, Professor of Christian History at Pacific Lutheran, does a masterful job of shining this light on baptism. By lifting up a multitude of images, Torvend describes baptism as the process leading people to immersion in holy waters and as a way of life that is nothing less than an immersion into the world for those who emerge from the waters.

There is an impulse in North American culture that wants to reduce religion or Christianity to quick fixes, sound bites, or simple solutions. In contrast, Torvend calls for a baptismal practice filled with words and actions “through which one’s public, personal, communal, and eternal identity is bestowed.” With something this large and mysterious, one meaning will not suffice. When it comes to the counter-cultural way of baptism, one word will not do. Multi-valiant speech, practice, and ritual are required. We will speak of baptism as gift and challenge. We will describe it as forgiveness and initiation into the life of the Trinity. The newly baptized will be wedded to the community and to the world. We will welcome people through water and light. We will anoint them with oil and clothe them in new garments.

In drawing out the many meanings of baptism, the author appeals to a very different impulse than that of the prevailing culture. He addresses the postmodern ethos. Scorning notions of truth as one-dimensional, there is yearning in the postmodern milieu for greater participation in mystery and an appreciation for multiple meaning. The author draws upon ancient sources to speak to this phenomenon. First, he appeals to the Bible as a “wonderfully complex witness to a mystery.” The mystery of Christ cannot be nailed down or marketed for mass consumption. Baptism itself isn’t so much defined in the Bible as it is described with multiple images: rebirth, adoption, regeneration, death, and resurrection. Secondly, he lifts up the robust baptismal practices of the earliest centuries with particular reference to preaching and the teaching of St. Ambrose. Torvend contends that faithful baptismal practice will not only strengthen but alter the life and vision of a congregation. Such a practice shapes the community for a life of service in the world that cries for healing, reconciliation, and peace. Both of these things are needed: the support of God’s faithful people and the challenge to serve all in need.

There is rich material in this small book. Practitioners of the catechumenate will want to read



it for many reasons. Catechumenal leaders will want to consult it for an articulate vision of the process, anchored in Scripture and tradition. Catechists will find this book an inspiration for the ministry of formation. Those committed to the ministry of mystagogy will be fed by Torvend’s insights as they seek to unpack the rites and symbols of baptism and their relevance for daily life. By opening up the many meanings of baptism, this book teases the imagination and gives new impetus for the ministry of Christian formation. (*Flowing Water, Uncommon Birth: Christian Baptism in a Post-Christian World* by Samuel Torvend, Augsburg-Fortress, 2011)

Rev. Bryon Hansen
Bethelhem Lutheran, Auburn CA

NEXT NAAC GATHERING AND REGIONAL TRAINING INSTITUTE

August 3-5, 2012 at the Immaculate Heart Retreat Center in Spokane, WA. For more information check out the NAAC website at www.catechumenate.org or contact Devra Betts, Registrar, at devra@holyspiritlc.org. You can call her at 702-232-8383 or NAAC President, Rick Rouse, at 612-710-7959.

LOOKING AHEAD: NAAC AND APLM IN CHICAGO JUNE 2013

Two organizations committed to robust baptismal celebration and formation will join together in an exciting initiative next year. NAAC and The Associated Parishes for Liturgy and Mission (APLM) will co-sponsor a national conference scheduled for June 27-29, 2013. The event, with a working title of "Stirring the Waters: Reclaiming Baptism as Central to Christian Faith and Practice," will take place at the Techny Towers in Chicago.

The conference will gather and equip those who are passionate about careful, deep formation for Christian discipleship. It will feature inspiring and insightful addresses, practical workshops, and opportunities for focused conversation.

The plan is to offer sessions and resources geared to people with a variety of needs and interests: those already engaged in catechumenal ministry, those just considering or embarking upon a deliberate process of baptismal formation, people involved in emerging church settings aiming to revitalize ancient practices and "make the faith real" in people's lives, and denominational officials who support people and communities in any or all of those circumstances.

For NAAC, the conference is a natural extension of the organization's ongoing work. With a mandate to promote and nurture the catechumenal process across Protestant denominations in North America, NAAC holds a national conference or series of regional events annually. It also partners with denominational and ecumenical groups to foster the inculturation and adaptation of the catechumenate.

The project makes sense for APLM, too. Established in 1946, APLM is a network of Episcopalians (USA), Anglicans (Canada) and others who share a passion for and commitment to liturgy that is vital and transformative, appropriate to culture and context, and revelatory of God's lively mission in the world. It has enjoyed a fruitful history promoting renewal through participation in drafting and promoting the *Book of Common Prayer* (1979) in the USA, and the *Book of Alternative Services* (1985) in Canada, championing the centrality of baptism as the foundation for Christian ministry, working for the restoration of the catechumenate within the life of the church, and providing various resources to support missional congregations. As long ago

as the early 1980's, APLM sponsored major conferences on the retrieval of the catechumenate in today's church. Its efforts, in fact, were a contributing factor in the establishment of NAAC.

APLM has played an important role in recent General Conventions of the Episcopal Church, advancing an agenda based upon the implications of baptism's centrality in the church's life, ministry and mission, and responsive to major issues currently facing the Anglican Communion. In addition, APLM co-sponsored two national consultations on baptismal theology. This project included liturgical scholars and practitioners, bishops, parish clergy, and Christian educators representing the diversity of the Church. It has produced educational resources to equip people to fully implement in parish and diocesan life the baptismal vision long championed by APLM. The conference with NAAC is an exciting next stage in this trajectory of initiatives.

More specific details about the conference will be available in the fall. Until then, mark June 27-29 on your 2013 calendar.

Jay Koyle, APLM President and
NAAC Board Member

A WATERED GARDEN

BOOK REVIEW: *A Watered Garden: Christian Worship and Earth's Ecology* by Benjamin M. Stewart (2012, Augsburg Fortress, 96 pp., \$9.99 paperback). Although originally written as Lutheran

adult curriculum, this book is too rich to be hoarded by Lutherans and too relevant to wait for a class to convene. Stewart takes us on "short hikes" into the relation of baptism to water, of the calendar

to days and seasons, of the Eucharist to fields and vineyards, and of funerals to our earthly bodies. (Reprinted with permission from Christian Century Online, April 16, 2012.)

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contribution and wish her well. Special thanks should also be extended to the members of our NAAC regional training teams: Devra Betts, Jessicah Duckworth, Dick and Elise Eslinger, Sherman Hesselgrave, John Hill, Paul

Palumbo, Mary Preus, Rick Rouse, Wayne Schwab, Teresa Striklen, and Tom Witt. What a joy to work with you all.

Mark your calendars now for upcoming NAAC events: **June 27-29, 2013** Chicago — NAAC hosts a Joint Conference on

Baptism with Associated Parishes for Liturgy and Mission (APLM) **August 5-8, 2014** Vancouver BC — Annual NAAC Gathering and Catechumenate Training Event.

Blessings of the Pentecost Season.

Rick Rouse, President

TESTIMONIAL

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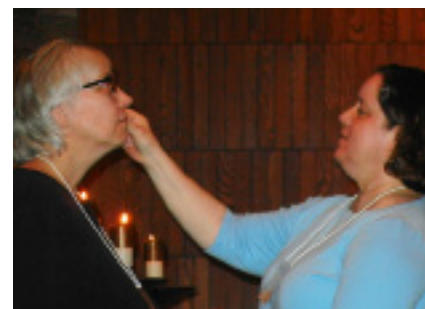
the cross on her feet. It was so intimate and personal, and yet a public ritual, that anyone participating could not help but be touched by it.

The modern catechumenate fits very well with many existing programs for formation of new members or confirmation. The new idea for me was that

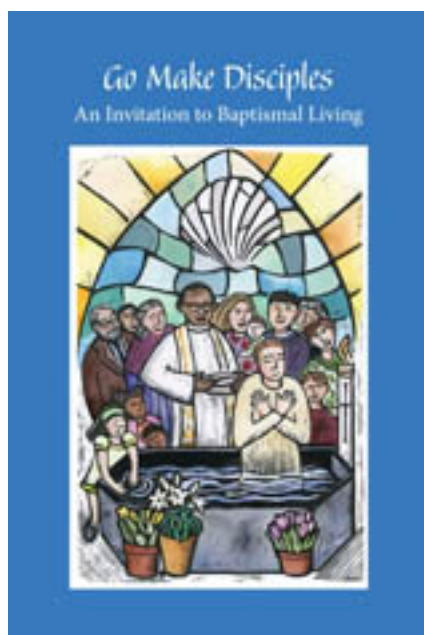
the sponsors, drawn from existing members, grow through the process as well. And [participants] are not only the unbaptized coming into the church but can be transfers or anyone wanting to renew their baptismal vows and grow in their faith. So as different members step up to be sponsors, the whole congregation can be transformed by this rich pilgrim-

age. I look forward to putting this into practice in my congregation.

Anne McCorkle Garrett



NEW BOOK ON THE CATECHUMENATE



Go Make Disciples: An Invitation to Baptismal Living... offers a map and a trail guide for taking the Jesus road, beginning with hearing the stories and telling the tales of that journey. This is a guide for leaders and congregations who want to help themselves and others learn to walk in company, how to climb the hills and keep going in the dark, and above all, how to make this the journey of your life, toward the Reign of God."

— Katharine Jefeerts Schori,
Presiding Bishop of the Episcopal Church.

This ecumenical handbook offers a basic "how-to" for preparing adults for baptism and affirmation of baptism and Christian discipleship. Materials intended for group use and distribution are available on the companion CD-ROM, which is sold separately and will be available mid-May.

Appropriate for a wide range of Protestant denominations, especially Anglican, Episcopal, Lutheran, Presbyterian, Reformed, and United Methodist.

Order from augzburgfortress.org or 800.328.4648.

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