

## PENTECOST WIND BLOWING THROUGH NAAC

The Holy Spirit continues to blow mighty winds of renewal and hope through NAAC and into Christ's church. We just celebrated the largest attendance of a NAAC training institute with over sixty participants at our regional event this April in Houston, Texas. Thanks to the good people at Christ the King Lutheran Church for hosting us. We now turn our sights toward our international conference on baptism being co-sponsored by NAAC and APLM (Associated Parishes for Liturgy and Mission) in Chicago, June 27-29. (See related article.)

Ann McElligott is being honored with a Memorial Scholarship Fund. Our dear friend Ann, an Episcopal Priest who is considered the godmother of NAAC and the Protestant expression of the modern catechumenate movement, died after a long battle with can-

cer at her home in Portland at the end of 2012. The NAAC Board has established a scholarship fund in her honor. Donations to this fund are used to provide individuals (especially students) with financial assistance to attend various NAAC events. If you are interested in contributing to this cause, use the PAYPAL donate option on our website or send a check to our treasurer, Devra Betts, at 6400 Shawnee Pl., Las Vegas, NV 89107. All contributions are tax deductible.

We invite you to pray for the health of two of our board members. Jerry Pare (Sacramento, CA) continues to recover from open heart surgery and Sherman Hesselgrave (Toronto, ON) is recovering from cancer surgery. We also offer a prayer of thanksgiving on behalf of Jessicah Duckworth on the publication of her new book



Ann McElligott

with Augsburg Fortress, *Wide Welcome: How the Unsettling Presence of Newcomers Can Save the Church*. Sounds like a must read.

May the Holy Spirit strengthen us all for baptismal living.  
Rick Rouse, President

## CONGREGATIONS INVITED TO HOST

The North American Association for the Catechumenate held a parish-based training institute in Houston this spring. Hosted by Christ the King Lutheran, the event drew over sixty participants from around the country. Local Arrangements Coordinator Denise Engle, a CTK member, led a dedicated group of volunteers

in providing Texas style hospitality for the three day program. An ecumenical team of Episcopalians, Lutherans, and Presbyterians served as presenters, small group facilitators, and worship leaders. (See photo following.) One participant remarked on their evaluation form: "It was a terrific learning experience that was also

*spiritually enriching. Lots of prayers and thought went into the event which was beautifully executed."*

NAAC is now entertaining invitations from other churches in the US and Canada who would be interested in hosting a regional training event in 2014 or 2015. Christ the King saw this as an

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## RECLAIMING BAPTISM'S MISSIONAL SUBVERSIVE NATURE

"Stirring the Waters: Reclaiming the Missional and Subversive Nature of Baptism" is the theme of this year's Annual Gathering. It is being held in Chicago June 27-29, beginning Thursday at 3:30



**Ruth Meyers**

NAAC's partner in this event is The Associated Parishes for Liturgy and Mission (APLM), an organization that networks members of The Episcopal Church and The Anglican Church of Canada who share a passion for promoting renewal in the dynamic relationship that exists between the liturgical life and missional vocation of the church. APLM develops resources and promotes practices to equip the church in reclaiming and living out a robust baptismal ecclesiology.

***A leading figure of modern baptismal renewal among those presenting:***

Participants at NAAC's upcoming conference, June 27-29 in Chicago, will enjoy a rare opportunity to interact with one of the leading figures of the liturgical movement in North America. For a half-century, Dr. Louis Weil, Professor Emeritus of Church Divinity School of the Pacific (CDSP), has

p.m. with the first plenary session and ending on Saturday, June 29 at 3:00 pm. Registration/check-in is available beginning Thursday at 1:30. The event will feature three outstanding keynote speak-



**Ben Stewart**

been an articulate and passionate advocate for a robust baptismal ecclesiology in the life of the church. From preparing people for ordained ministry to helping shape the renewed rites of The Episcopal Church, his influence has been profound and far-reaching. During the conference, there'll be a "meet & greet" at which he will sign copies of his new book.

Dr. Weil, who was awarded the prestigious Berakah Award in 2012 by the North American Academy of Liturgy to honor his distinguished contribution to liturgical studies, will offer a focus session on presiding and baptismal formation. Tackling the question of how the role of the worship leader is formative for the congregation, he will place particular emphasis on the ways in which the presider's ministry can help us to "live out of" our baptism. In his new book, *Liturgical Sense: The Logic of Rite*, Dr. Weil

ers: Ruth Meyers of the Church Divinity School of the Pacific, Ben Stewart of the Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago, and Jeff Lee, Episcopal Bishop of the Diocese of Chicago.



**Louis Weil**

traces the historical, theological and pastoral currents that are prompting a radical re-thinking about the presider's role at the Eucharist. His session at the Gathering will pick up on these themes in light of the conference's overall concern.

***Practical, Engaging Workshops Key Feature of June Conference:***

A number of other exciting, practical offerings will be included in the conference's fare of workshops. Among the sampling of workshops are the following presenters:

**Teresa Lockhart Stricklen**, Associate for Worship in The Office of Theology and Worship of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) and director of The Academy of Missional Preaching, will facilitate the workshop "Baptismal Preaching as Subversive Speech OR Preaching the Reign of God as Baptism's Subversive Submersion."

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## RECLAIMING BAPTISM'S . . .

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According to Dr. Stricklen, baptism calls us to renounce our allegiance to the dominion of death and destruction and pledge our allegiance to God's Reign. This is also the gospel that we are called to preach as a continuation of what Jesus himself preached, lived, died for, and was raised to rule over: "The Kingdom of God is at hand. Repent and believe." Dr. Stricklen will accompany participants in exploring how preaching can be subversive speech that helps us see baptism's subversion of the world.



**Pam Voves**, a lay rostered leader of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America serving on the Metropolitan Chicago Synod Dis-

cipleship Team, will consider the implications of ritual, story, and relationship in preparing parents for the baptism of their child. She will offer practical insights and strategies about how parents and sponsors of infant candidates can be helped to see baptism as much more than a cultural rite of passage or familial duty, instead embracing it as God's profound promise for their life and the life of the child.

**Eileen Crowley** of Catholic Theological Union in Chicago has realized fabulous results introducing small groups to communal media-art-making as a way to help people discern and deepen their sense of baptismal vocation, and to begin to perceiving the world with "sacramental eyes." She will share examples of her work with groups on Photography as a Spiritual Practice and on Digital Storytelling, offering models of her group process that can be adapted to various settings.

**The Rev. Canon Dr. John Hill** will be on hand to help participants contend with the pressing pastoral problem of those faced with the dilemma of restoring the catechumenate when there are

more baptized people who need it than unbaptized.

Other workshops will look at celebrating the rites of Initiation, the formation of youth and young adults for leadership and for justice ministries, baptism and the challenge of consumerism, baptism and the care of Creation, and baptism as "the moment that lasts a lifetime" — following up on the practical implications of one of the keynote presentations.

This joint conference will be hosted by the Techny Towers Conference and Retreat Center, 2001 Waukegan Road, P.O. Box 176, Techny, Illinois 60082, telephone: 847-272-1100. You may wish to visit its website: <http://www.technytowers.org>

For regular updates about the conference or for a printable brochure, please visit <http://www.catechumenate.org> Registration deadline is June 10.

To register online, visit: <http://www.rsvpbook.com/event.php?456526>

Jay Koyle, member of NAAC's Board of Directors and President of APLM

**Partial scholarships available for seminarians, students, mission developers, and others.**

Inquire by June 1st to Registrar, Devra Betts.  
Cell: 702-232-8383 or email her at [devrabetts@gmail.com](mailto:devrabetts@gmail.com).



## CONGREGATIONS INVITED TO HOST



Above left: Members of Leadership Team at Christ the King Lutheran were among sixty participants at Houston catechumenate training event. Right: Lighting the Easter Fire at NAAC's April training institute.

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opportunity to immerse a number of their staff and leaders in the catechumenate experience as they prepare to initiate this journey of discipleship in their own congregation. For those congregations who are already practicing the catechumenate, it can be an opportunity for sharing their experience while renewing

their own team members. Mark Mummert, Minister of Worship at Christ the King, shares his experience in helping to lead the event in his own congregation:

*"Hosting a NAAC Training Institute in our congregation was a unique blessing. We learned so much from everyone — the profound and pastoral leaders,*

*the attendees with diverse experiences with the catechumenate, and those new to the process. Plus, we were able to include many people from our congregation in the training, both roster and lay leaders, giving us a shared foundation as we move forward in developing the catechumenate in our own ministry context."*



NAAC Training Team (left to right): Rev. Michael Merriman (Dallas), Rev. Karin Liebster (CTK, Houston), Rev. David Batchelder (Plano), Mark Mummert (CTK, Houston), Teresa Stricklen (Assoc. Director for Worship, Presbyterian Church USA), Bishop Michael Rinehart (Texas-Louisiana Gulf Coast Synod, ELCA), Rick Rouse (NAAC President), and Rev. Robert Moore (CTK, Houston).

For those interested in hosting or attending a future training event, contact Rick Rouse at [rwrouse@com-cast.net](mailto:rwrouse@com-cast.net) or call 612-710-7959.

Please check out the website at [www.catechumenate.org](http://www.catechumenate.org)

## MYSTAGOGY IN THE EASTER SEASON: REFLECTIONS . . .

Mystagogy in the Easter Season: Reflections of and for the Congregation

The fifty days of Easter are a time for unpacking the sacraments and making connections that establish the newly baptized in the community and in faithful post-baptismal living. This post-baptismal catechesis is initiated and sustained throughout Easter in joyful liturgy, preaching and catechetical sessions. There is an attentiveness to the newly baptized (neophytes) with the whole community praying for and embracing them. The pedagogical model, as in the rest of the catechumenate, is experience followed by reflection and living into the implications of one's experience.

Cyril, Bishop of Jerusalem, began his mystagogical catechesis (presumably the day after baptism): "I long ago desired, true born and dearly beloved children of the church, to discourse to you concerning these spiritual and heavenly Mysteries; but knowing well, that seeing is far more persuasive than hearing, I waited till this season; that finding you more open to the influence of my words from this your experience, I might take and lead you to the brighter and more fragrant meadow of this present paradise . . . that you may know the deep meaning to you-ward of what was done on that evening of your baptism" [The opening of *St. Cyril of Jerusalem's Mystagogical Catechesis*].

The church rejoices in its neophytes as families rejoice and attend to a new born child. This

attention to our newly baptized may seem odd, even exaggerated, to some. Yet, they are new born and, as in all families, we intentionally make room for them in our hearts and in our family dynamics. As every new born, they receive love, guidance, and continuing formation for baptismal living. And they are reminders to us of our own birth, growth and identity in Christ. Throughout Easter, they wear baptismal gowns — albs with cinctures — reminding all that they are new children of God, sisters and brothers in Christ.

The aim of mystagogy is that in preaching, in catechetical meetings, and in the general life and tone of the congregation for the weeks of Easter, we will unpack the sacraments of initiation. Both neophytes and congregations will continue to deepen their grasp of the Paschal mystery, making it part of their lives. Nor have the

sponsors yet finished their ministry. Now is their time to walk beside the neophytes and assist in gaining insights both in relationships and in the deep matters of the faith we profess.

Post-baptismal catechesis (mystagogy) introduces the newly baptized into a fuller and more effective understanding of the mysteries experienced in the sacraments. Yet this work is not just about them. It is the occasion for the entire faith community to explore and enter more deeply into rites common to dying and rising with Christ. The way of prayer establishes faith (*lex orandi, lex credendi*). As we celebrate the sacraments at the Easter Vigil, we come anew to faith. Here, as in all of the catechumenal journey, the ministry of the catechumen becoming a candidate and then becoming a neophyte is to

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*Photo of a re-enactment of the Easter Vigil at 2013 NAAC Training Institute in Houston*

## MYSTAGOGY IN THE EASTER SEASON

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remind us of our continuing conversion. For this reason, the neophytes, sitting front and center before the preacher during the sermon and vested in the baptismal garment gives focus for the rest of the faithful. (RCIA, no. 246). Even the alb provides a teaching moment!

What about preaching during Eastertide? Mystagogues in the early church directly addressed the neophytes. This is fine in congregations with a single Sunday service. But what about those with multiple services? Does the preacher's mystagogy pretend to address the absent neophytes? No. Should the preacher ignore the reality of new members of the body of Christ? No. What the preacher can do is remind the assembly that among us are those who have just been born of water and the Spirit. The preacher can share the insights and connections made with regard to the neophytes' new being in Christ in the other services as well. And, with several infants and children baptized, the preacher can also allude to their future and the work of the community in forming

them as disciples. It may be that sponsors and pastors can arrange for the neophytes to attend each of the other service on different weeks to that they can be seen, greeted, prayed for and known.

Ideally, this mystagogia — this interpretation and illumining of experience will unfold intensely during the week following Easter, and then in Eucharist each Sunday of the Great Fifty Days, as well as in the weekly catechumenal meetings. Preaching during this time makes connections of the Sunday readings to the experience of the sacraments (baptism, anointing/confirmation, and Eucharist) and to baptismal living. Scripture, cultural and natural images (water, oil, bread, wine, garments, etc.) found in the Scriptures and the rites evoke the imagination and serve as means for illumination and making connections with daily life. The great mystagogues, St. Cyril of Jerusalem, Augustine of Hippo, Ambrose of Milan, are our mentors here.

Since the newly baptized have been incorporated into the body of Christ, Sunday liturgies during the weeks of Easter emphasize

their interaction with the faithful. Joyful celebration and settings for informal welcome and fellowship are encouraged. Preachers, sponsors, and catechists can also profitably focus on such questions as: As baptized, spirit anointed, table-sharing Christians, how will we endeavor to follow Jesus Christ under the guidance of the Spirit? What is your sense of calling? How will your life be offered as a living sacrifice in the community of Christ's royal priesthood and in the world? Who or what in your world needs the love of God and your active attention? What support will you need from other Christians in order to continue as Christ's faithful disciple? How has being on this journey shaped your life? How is the Spirit calling you to participate in mutual support for faithful discipleship? All of this is cause for profound self-examination for all of us in our congregations. They are questions that take us back to Acts 2:42-47 as one leads and lives into the paschal mystery of Christ.

Dan Benedict, Abbot,  
The Order of Saint Luke

NAAC Newsletter Editor: Jerry Pare  
21620 Capital Avenue, Sacramento CA 95816  
916.446.2513 Jpare111452@gmail.com  
Guest Editor: Rick Rouse