

NAAC FUTURE IS BRIGHT

There are many hopeful signs to report to our NAAC community midyear. The first is that our Planning Team has been hard at work these past months and that the 2009 Annual Gathering is shaping up to be one of the best NAAC events ever. This year our intentional focus is on reaching the under-35 crowd in our congregations and communities, hence the theme "Ancient Rites for a New Generation of Disciples." In

addition to our keynote speaker, Dr. Craig A. Satterlee, we have invited two leaders in the Emerging Church movement (Emily Scott and Isaac Everett) to join us as resource persons and presenters. We are asking all of our NAAC members and friends to help us spread the word about this exciting event. Feel free to copy the article which follows for your colleagues and/or direct them to our website (www.catechumenate.org) for more information.

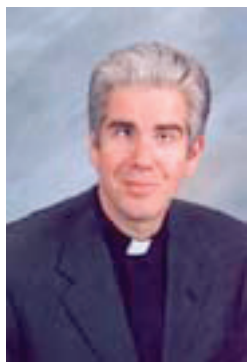
Another important step we've

taken this year is to re-purpose ourselves into a "working board" with each member of the board taking on specific responsibilities and in some cases heading up a task force. While this is still a work in progress, below you will find listed what areas our board members have volunteered for to date. Everyone is working hard to help

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2009 ANNUAL GATHERING

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early Christians worshiped and formed new Christians as a pattern and practice for forming new Christians in our time.

The featured speaker is Dr. Craig Satterlee, popular speaker and associate professor of homiletics at the Lutheran School of Theology in Chicago, will explore how the ancient rites of the catechumenate can be applied to prepare and enrich a new generation of disciples. He is author of

Creative Preaching on the Sacraments, Ambrose of Milan's *Mystagogical Preaching* and, most recently, *When God Speaks Through Worship*. The theme of his lecture is "Living the Promise of Our Baptism: Connecting Worship, Experience, and the Sacraments." Rather than traditional lectures, Dr. Satterlee will ground his presentations in experience and reflection and in breakout groups so

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HOW TO SELECT A SPONSOR

The community of Trinity Episcopal Cathedral in Sacramento recently held a "Discernment Evening." Proposed by the Reverend Kathleen Kelly, a canon on the cathedral staff, the purpose was to discover who might be called to be a sponsor. The list of invitees was not comprised of those who were thought to be good sponsors but rather those whom it was thought would be able to discern who might be called to this particular ministry.

The evening looked like this:

- Invitation with RSVP to dinner and a time of prayer-

ful discernment.

- When people gathered, dinner was served, and during the meal, a reflection was led on Ananias' role in the conversion of Saul/Paul.
- Each person was then given opportunity to tell a

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FRESH EXPRESSIONS: A CONFERENCE DEBRIEFING

"If Christ is the embodiment of God, and the Church is Christ's body on earth, then no single expression of Church can ever exhaust Christ."

Rowan Williams,
Archbishop of Canterbury

Innovative concepts of Christian community have been around since the Acts of the Apostles, from the congregation where Ananias and Sapphira were members (with its 100% tithing policy) to the 10,000-member megachurch in McMansionville, to coffee-house or skateboard church.

In 2004, the Church of England published a report, "Mission-shaped Church," which coined a term for these newly-minted manifestations of Christian community, calling them "fresh expressions of church." Archbishop Rowan Williams imagined the Church of England becoming a "mixed economy" church, where traditional congregations and

fresh expressions of church would operate side by side.

Unlike the emerging church, which some characterize as a response to disillusionment with institutional religion, the fresh expressions of church movement has not only been embraced and encouraged by both the Church of England and the Methodist Church (in England), it has now been exported to North America. Fresh Expressions Canada (FXca) held a three-day conference in Toronto mid-February, attended by 135 registrants from Canada and the United States. The keynoters, Paul Bayes, National Mission and Evangelism Adviser to the Archbishops' Council, and Phil Potter, a church planter from Liverpool, presented the context and theory behind Fresh Expressions and shared some case studies and research.

Other practitioners led workshops on Messy Church (church for parents with young children),

Contemplative Fire, the Challenge of Cell Church, and Redesigning Church, among others.

Archbishop William Temple would be proud to know that a phrase he uttered countless times (but, apparently, never actually wrote down) has been adapted for a new century: "A fresh expression is a form of church for our changing culture established primarily for the benefit of people who are not yet members of any church."

As an advocate for the catechumenate, I found myself unavoidably contemplating what catechumenal process would look like in some of these nontraditional contexts. Who knows, maybe at a future NAAC conference we might be offering workshops like "Messy Church Mystagogy" or "Café Church Catechesis," or something more generic like "Fresh Expressions of Catechumenate."

Sherman Hesselgrave
Church of the Holy Trinity, Toronto

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move NAAC from "adolescence into adulthood" as an organization. To that end, the board will meet in April at Pacific Lutheran University for a planning session designed to build on the visioning process that was initiated at last year's consultation. The purpose will be to develop a Strategic Plan to present at the Annual Gathering for input and affirmation.

The board is already acting on some of the recommendations that came out of last year's consultation and was confirmed by feedback from participants at the 2008 gathering. You will soon see an updated website that will include an interactive format so that NAAC members can participate in an online community where they will be able to freely share questions, ideas, and resources with each

other. Finally, we recognize an ongoing need for funding of our organization. If you have ideas about contacts we might make in seeking grants or other kinds of funding, please contact me or any of the directors. And we encourage you to consider making a regular gift to NAAC's ministry, particularly for scholarships to this summer's Annual Gathering. We look forward to serving you in the months and years ahead.

Blessings, Rick Rouse, President
NAAC Board: Dan Benedict, Secretary and Public Relations; Bryon Hanson, Newsletter Editor; Sherman Hesselgrave, Fundraising Task Force; Jay Koyle, Board Criteria and Recruitment; Mary Peterson, Membership Director; Bev Piro, Treasurer; Rick Rouse, President and Chair of 2009 Planning Team; Samuel Torvend, Ecumenical Liaison.

NAAC ASSESSMENT SUMMARY REPORT

In the fall of 2008, an online survey was conducted as part of an assessment process related to determining future directions for the North American Association for the Catechuminate (NAAC). While a small number responded, the survey yielded some helpful information regarding attitudes and hopes for expectations. Of the 14 respondents to the survey, about 40% were parish pastors and 60% were lay. 50% identified themselves as Lutheran, 35% as Anglican or Episcopalian, and 15% as Methodist. Close to 60% of those taking the survey indicated that their congregations were currently engaged in the practice of the catechuminate and another 7% thought their congregations were interested in exploring this further as a means of spiritual formation and discipling. About 65% said they were currently members of NAAC and about half of those completing the survey had attended the 2008 annual gathering.

The first question resulted in a virtual tie. "As an ecumenical organization, what are ways for NAAC to connect best with its constituencies in the larger faith community?" (Check all that apply). Two answers received a 93% response: a) NAAC can provide a liaison between denominations in sharing of "best practices" in faith

formation; and b) NAAC can and should maintain a close relationship with those various denominations who work in the area of worship and spiritual formation. Another 79% suggested that NAAC encourage denominations to produce practical resources for the parish in the area of faith formation.

The second question dealt with ways that NAAC could best carry out its mission of being a resource to congregations in reclaiming and using the ancient Christian rite of spiritual formation called the catechuminate. Maintaining a website that provides a forum for sharing of ideas ranked first with 50% suggesting it as the highest priority and another 27% as priority number two. Offer an annual gathering for training, networking, and enrichment ranked a close second with 43% suggesting it as the highest priority and another 29% as priority number two. Other roles for NAAC included publicizing regional workshops that offer training and providing a clearing house of available resources and congregations active in the catechuminate.

Responders were asked to prioritize the main objectives of the annual conference and did so as follows:

1. Inspiration from rich worship and keynote speakers (50% indicated first

priority for 1.92 rating average).

2. Opportunities for networking with other practitioners (42% indicated second priority for 2.25 rating average). 3. Practical training in catechuminate through workshops (1/3 indicated third priority for 2.50 rating average).

4. Sharing of ideas and resources (54% ranked as fourth priority for 3.15 rating average).

When asked what sources of income NAAC might consider to support the ministry of the catechuminate, 92% suggested grants from various sources including denominations; 85% indicated gifts from donors and congregational foundations might be a good source; and another 77% thought that income could be generated from both annual membership fees as well as tuition from the annual gathering. And when asked to indicate how they themselves might provide support for NAAC's ministry, responders replied as follows: 92% said that NAAC should raise the annual membership fee but have categories such as student, retired, group discounts for 3 or more from a congregation); 30% indicated they would assist in exploring a gift from their faith community; and 23% offered to participate in a one-time gift (donation) to NAAC.

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story of a person who had been an Ananias in their life. No one passed, and there was tremendous sharing. Each person lit a candle after telling their story.

- Someone gave an explanation of what a sponsor is by speaking about being a companion on a journey. A few folk wanted

to know some more concrete aspects regarding what it entailed, so some discussion around catechumenal process unfolded.

- The gathering broke into three groups: Centering Prayer, Lectio Divina, and Vespers. Each leader led a form of prayer. Part of the prayer was asking for inspiration and discernment.

- Back in the large group people responded at table gatherings around the phrases: (a) "I feel in my heart that _____ is called to be a sponsor" or (b) "I feel in my heart that I am called to be a sponsor."

- People were given opportunity to pass on any or all rounds.

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participants may consider practical implications for catechesis and formation in their own contexts.

Worship will be a prominent feature at the gathering led by emerging church leaders. Isaac Everett creates music for the urban mystics and shares in leading worship and music at "Transmis-

sion," an underground church he co-founded. He is artist-in-residence at the Church of the Epiphany and a recent graduate of Union Seminary. Emily is a lay liturgist and Episcopalian, currently the director of worship at the Riverside Church in New York City and founder of a budding church called St. Lydia's that meets week-

ly in Manhattan. She is a graduate of Yale Divinity School.

This year's gathering promises to draw upon "Roots and Wings" – the generative roots of the early church and the freedom to adapt the Gospel to present day urban and youth contexts.

To register: waages@k-com.net, 503.654.6359. See NAAC website.

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Names were recorded.

• The discernment came to an end once it was clear that everyone had given most of the names that came to their heart and mind.

• The result: fifty sponsors!

Jerry Pare' from the cathedral staff and a member of the catechumenate team commented: "In the past I have always struggled with finding sponsors and rec-

ommending that candidates not have their spouse or significant others as sponsors. We now have a large enough pool that I think we will be able to do some good matching." Amen.

BOOK REVIEW

Alan Krieder's *The Change of Conversion and the Origin of Christendom* is an easy-to-read history of the changes that took place in evangelism over the first several centuries, particularly as it concerned transformation of human lives in Christ. As such it provides an excellent backdrop that helps sacramental preachers

understand the contexts for early catechumenate methods, how shifts in these contexts resulted in changes in the catechumenate, and the evolving role of sacramental preaching in the midst of these changes. The book ends with insightful comments about methods of evangelism that could bring about true, deep conver-

sions in a post-Christendom era. These insights have implications for the role of sacramental preaching. (Excerpt from "Suggested Resources for Further Reading" in Craig A. Satterlee and Lester Ruth's *Creative Preaching on the Sacraments* published by Discipleship Resources 2001.)

DEEPENING THE MYSTERY

Deepening the Mystery: A Guided Journal Through Mystagogy is a rich resource that might be used by individual neophytes or at group meetings for the year following initiation. In journal format with space for writing, the year's topics encourage reflection on initiation that are both inward-looking and outward-focused. Themes include belonging, trust, faith, ongoing conversion, the call to service, the church year, sharing faith, a tour of the church, the stages of the catechumenal journey, etc. See the review of this new resource under Resources for Post Baptism on the NAAC website.

■ "Several decades ago Archbishop William Temple was asked what was the task of the church. . . . To be itself and not do anything at all. All that it does is secondary and expressive of what it is. And, first of all, its duty is to be in living actuality . . . the fellowship of those who have received the power of the Holy Spirit through the revelation of the love of God in Christ. It exists to be the redeemed community which worships as redeemed." (Cited in a recent essay by Dan Benedict)

NAAC Newsletter Editor: Rev. Bryon Hansen
1279 High Street, Auburn CA 95603
530.885.4515
bryon.hansen@yahoo.com