

ANTICIPATION IS THE WATCHWORD

This article comes to you during Advent, the season of waiting and anticipation. Those entering the catechumenate process do so with eager waiting and anticipation of their initiation into the community of faith through baptism (or renewing their commitment through affirmation of baptism). Just so, NAAC looks toward the New Year before us with great anticipation and expectation.

The Board of Directors continues to help NAAC live into our strategic vision and new future. Some of the examples include the following. First, we continue to enhance our communication and accessibility to resources by

expanding our presence on the internet. We have upgraded our interactive NING site and our Facebook members are on the increase. Due to the four training events in 2012, we have also seen a surge of new friends on Constant Contact. Second, we have witnessed the growing visibility and viability of our organization as a partner in faith formation and discipleship. The congregational resource *Go Make Disciples: An Invitation to Baptismal Living* (a joint project with Augsburg Fortress) has received rave reviews from denominational leaders.

And NAAC will hold a congregationally based catechumenate

training event in April hosted by Christ the King Lutheran Church in Houston. Third, we are branching out into new ventures in 2013. We will be hosting a webinar in January with practitioners answering "live" questions about implementing the catechumenate in various congregational contexts. We are also exploring a video project "Faith Stories from the Catechumenate." And finally we are holding our first joint conference in collaboration with the Association of Parishes for Liturgy and Mission this coming June in Chicago.

I am personally grateful for the

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CONFIRMATION AND CHURCH LEADERSHIP

The General Convention of The Episcopal Church (TEC) occurs every three years. In 2012 deputies and bishops gathered in Indianapolis, Indiana.

One of the issues they discussed was Confirmation and Leadership in the Church. The theology of the *Book of Common Prayer* (BCP) clearly teaches that Baptism is THE sacrament of full initiation into the Church (BCP, p. 298). However the Constitution and Canons make Confirmation, not Baptism, the sacramental prerequisite for leadership positions in the Church. For example, Canon III.4.1 states that the eight licensed ministries require that one be a "confirmed communicant in good standing." One must be confirmed to be a deputy at the General Convention and to be ordained. Some see a lack of conformity between the sacramental theology in the BCP and that reflected in the Constitution and Canons.

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REGIONAL TRAINING: HOUSTON, HERE WE COME

The North American Association for the Catechumenate (NAAC) will hold one training event in 2013 and it will be in Houston, Texas on April 25-27. A special invitation goes out to congregational teams in the Southeast and Southwest to join with members of various denominations at our host church, Christ the King Lutheran. An ecumenical team from NAAC (Rick Rouse, Lutheran; Michael Merriman, Episcopalian; and David Batchelder, Presbyterian) will lead participants through a three-day immersion experience that includes all four movements and the worship rites of the catechumenate. Both newcomers as well as experienced practitioners are urged to attend. In addition to catechumenate team members, this event is for pastors, music leaders, educators, and seminarians.

Denise Engle is the local parish coordinator for the event and is lining up a great team of volunteers. Participants will be warmly welcomed on the beautiful cam-

pus of Christ the King, across from Rice University in Houston. One of the features that will surely add to the richness of the event is the new immersion font that was recently installed in their sanctuary. Rev. Robert Moore is the host pastor and Mark Mummert will serve as the conference musician. Off site accommodations are being arranged at the Marriott, Houston Medical Center, at the special rate of only \$109/night. Use housing code CKCO and call reservations at 800-228-9290 or www.marriott.com/HOUMC

Registration is only \$275 per person. That includes the conference, notebook, most meals, and a copy of the new congregational resource *Go Make Disciples: An Invitation to Baptismal Living*. Go to the NAAC website at www.catechumenate.org and you will find two ways to register. You may use the online registration

option or you can download a brochure/registration form and mail with a check (made payable to NAAC) to Devra Betts, Registrar 6400 Shawnee Place Las Vegas, NV 89102. You may email her at devrabetts@gmail.com. For more information, you may also contact, Rick Rouse, NAAC President and Event Facilitator, at rwrouse@comcast.net or call 612-710-7959. Registration closes on April 1, 2013.

Hope to see you in Houston for our post-Easter celebration!



ANTICIPATION

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opportunity to serve alongside board members who are extremely dedicated to NAAC and passionate about catechumenate ministry. We have also been

blessed with numerous volunteers who willingly share their time and gifts.

As someone once said, "it takes a village to raise a child." It also takes a vital organization like

NAAC — with all of us working together — to lift up God's vision of baptismal living that continues to renew Christ's Church.

Advent Blessings,
Rick Rouse, President

Save the date and plan to attend:
"Stirring the Waters: Reclaiming the Subversive Nature of Baptism,"
the theme for the joint Gathering of NAAC and APLM
in Chicago, June 27 to 29, 2013
with featured speakers Ruth Meyers and Ben Stewart.
Register online at www.catechumenate.org



CONFIRMATION . . .

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The General Convention is comprised of two houses – the House of Deputies (lay and ordained CONFIRMED members) and the House of Bishops. As to the resolutions having to do with Confirmation and leadership positions in the Church, the final outcome was to refer these resolutions for further conversation in committee. There was a concern that the church might be on a path towards eliminating the sacrament of Confirmation. The multiple responses to the question of “what is the significance of Confirmation?” were also a factor in the discussion. Hopefully the further study and discussion will help the Episcopal Church clarify the response to that question. Multiple answers to the significance of Confirmation have lived side by side for centuries. The placement of the Confirmation rite with the other celebrations of Pastoral Offices signifies that Confirmation is a celebration of a milestone in a baptized believer’s life. It is not a celebration of initiation into the Church.

Fundamental to analysis of

sacramental theology is the question “what are we doing in this celebration?” Hence there is a difference in the significance of the act of baptism of infants and that of adults. With confirmation, the answer has been multiple. The bishop confirms a baptism that took place many years ago (often as an infant); or Confirmation serves as a sort of bat or bar mitzvah for youth. Similarly, Confirmation serves as a “graduation” from Sunday school. Perhaps Confirmation celebrates a significant “milestone” in a person’s journey of faith. The rite’s placement in the “Pastoral Offices” section of the BCP supports this meaning. However, the other meanings are there in practice if not in theory. For example, the link between Confirmation and leadership in the Church points to the “graduation” model. One receives “instruction in the history, structure and governance of The Episcopal Church” (Canon I.17) in order to be a leader in the Church. Hence we have “classes” for those preparing for Confirmation.

Many congregations combine formation for Baptism and Con-

firmation in the “catechumenate” process. And, quite often, the two are combined in the “classroom model” of preparation. With planning, it is possible to distinguish between the two paths with the distinction of rites (see The Book of Occasional Services: pp. 112-131 on catechumenal rites; pp 132 – 141 on rites related to Reaffirmation of Baptismal Vows) and the careful use of language. At best a visible distinction occurs between those in the catechumenate process and those preparing for Confirmation. If catechumens and candidates meet together, formation rather than classes should be the norm. This can be a challenge, but that is usually the case in facilitating and celebrating conversion.

One of the things I love about the Episcopal Church is that very little is “settled.” We will continue the discussion on the roles of both Baptism and Confirmation. And we will continue to celebrate the continuing conversion of all of God’s people.

Jerry Paré

Director of the Catechumenate
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FIRST WEBINAR IN JANUARY . . .

NAAC’S first webinar will answer your questions “Live and In Person.”

Participants who attended one of NAAC’s four regional training events in 2012 were promised the opportunity to explore their questions about implementing the catechumenate in their own

congregational setting.

Members of the 2012 training team who will be on deck to assist with the webinar conversation are Paul Palumbo, parish pastor in Chelan, WA and Jessicah Duckworth, professor at Luther Seminary.

All members of NAAC are

invited to join them online on Wednesday, January 16, 5-6:30 p.m. (EST). Questions can be submitted ahead of time on the NAAC Facebook page.

Check the NAAC website at www.catechumenate.org for more details and a link to the webinar site.

BOOK REVIEW

Leading Through the Waters by Paul Galbreath, Alban Institute, 2011.

How many times have you been admonished to “live the questions?” Such an admonishment may come from religious or spiritual teachers who invite us into a deep engagement with life and mystery, and away from certitude and narrow vision.

Now, reframe the admonition. What would it be like for us to live the baptismal questions? This exciting prospect is described by Paul Galbreath in his book, *Leading Through the Waters*. This Professor of Worship and Preaching at Union Presbyterian Seminary in Richmond, Virginia contends that “our whole life form a perpetual question mark” as we long for God and a deeper engagement with the things of God. Thus, in the catechumenal process the seeker asks questions. The catechumen poses questions. And once we emerge from the life-giving waters we follow Jesus Christ each day asking questions in order to examine our lives and our relationships. In a real sense, living out our baptismal vocation is a way of allowing Jesus to question us and so re-order our priorities and move us away from self-reliance and into a deeper journey of discipleship.

Galbreath’s book is organized around the primary questions in the basic movements of the catechumenal process:

- Inquiry: Why am I here and where am I going?
- Preparation: When will I be ready for baptism?
- Baptism: To whom do I belong and how will we mark this occasion?
- Reflection: What do I have to offer this community?

Drawing up the wisdom of the ancient tradition and contemporary liturgical renewal, the author does a fabulous job of presenting the Christian journey through the lens of baptismal preparation and baptismal living. With the use of rich images and stories from real life, he helps us imagine the baptismal journey as one that is grounded in Gospel and Christian tradition and simultaneously open to wonder and to the adventure of discerning our place in God’s mission and call to justice. This book helped me delve more deeply into the ritual questions:

- “What do you seek from Christ’s church?”
- “Do you turn from the power of sin and renounce evil and its power in the world?”
- “Do you desire to be baptized?”
- “Do you intend to continue in the covenant God made with you in Holy Baptism?”

Galbreath helps us see how the questions we ask of those preparing for baptism and the questions we ask of one another are within the context of the larger questions with which we live each day. He helps us connect worship with daily life.

Galbreath writes: “A primary goal of worship renewal is to recover baptism as a life-long journey in which our lives take on the sign of Christ. From this perspective, the sacraments can no longer be confined within the walls of our sanctuaries. Instead, the church uses water, bread, and wine – each a part of creation – to declare our status as beloved sons and daughters of God. This incredible good news prompts us to work for peace and justice and the redemption of the world that God created and declared as good” (120).

Each set of chapters, corresponding to the movements and moments in the catechumenate, conclude with a short reflection or homily. These provide rich fare equal to the chapters that precede them. This book will inspire and assist pastors and catechumenate practitioners as they seek to welcome and form people into the life-giving ways of Christ.

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