

## FROM MEMBERSHIP TO DISCIPLESHIP

A Reflection on the Renewed Catechumenate in the Episcopal Church

*It is Wednesday evening in downtown Kansas City, and a group of about twenty adults of different ages, shapes and backgrounds gather in Founders' Hall at Grace and Holy Trinity Cathedral at 6 p.m. During the next two hours they will share a meal together, process a 'table question' that is always more than a polite chat, engage in a presentation concerning spirituality or Christianity in everyday life or the Episcopal Church, share in a small group the Gospel from last Sunday, and close with shared prayer and a blessing.*

This is not an "instruction" class,

a program that is the 'flavor of the month,' or another committee meeting. This is the ancient process of the Christian community called the Catechumenate. It is both ageless and new to our time. At the Cathedral, this process of growing in faith and discipleship is simply referred to as "The Way."

The Cathedral community, in trying to discern a plan for the future, decided to explore an adult formation process that would make sense in the 21st century. Adults were approaching the congregation who once were active but had become inactive, were from a variety of Christian denominations but wanted to explore the Episcopal Church were 'cradle



Episcopalians" but wanted to renew and affirm their faith, and some had never been baptized or were unchurched and were looking for more in their lives.

The Easter Vigil already was the highlight of the liturgical year. Easter Vigil was clearly the

*Continued on page 2*

## ANNUAL GATHERING TO EXPLORE THE MYSTERY OF FAITH

"Sing a New Song: Unpacking the Mystery of Faith" will be the theme of the 2016 Annual Ecumenical Gathering hosted by the North American Association for the Catechumenate in Albuquerque, NM, Tuesday-Thursday, June 28-30. Keynote speakers Lizette Larson-Miller, Dan Benedict, and Marty Haugen will lead participants on a journey reflecting on our rich liturgical heritage and rediscovering the ancient faith formation process known as the Catechumenate.

**Marty Haugen**, well-known composer and musician, will reflect on the use of arts, symbols, space and music that enrich worship. In her presentations, **Lizette Larson-**

**Miller**, Professor at Western University, London, Ontario and chair of the International Anglican Liturgical Consultation, will both explore models of church ecclesiology and connect sacramental theology with modern discipleship. Finally, **Dan Benedict**, Abbot for the Order of St. Lukes and former director of worship resources for the United Methodist Church, will offer a structural framework for the movements of the catechumenate.

Pastors, seminarians, worship leaders, and educators will benefit from this amazing program that seeks to bring new vitality to communities of faith with a focus on discipleship and

baptismal living. The event, which also features practical workshops and inspiring worship, will be held at the beautiful Bosque Center in Albuquerque, New Mexico. It is a first class conference center run by the Episcopal Diocese of the Rio Grande, close to Santa Fe and other southwest attractions.

Scholarships are available for seminarians and first-call pastors. Register by May 15 and receive a \$50 early bird discount. For more information, contact Devra Betts at [devrabetts@gmail.com](mailto:devrabetts@gmail.com) and check out the NAAC website at [www.catechumenate.org](http://www.catechumenate.org)

## FROM MEMBERSHIP TO DISCIPLESHIP

*Continued from page 1*

moment where adults were baptized, confirmed, received, or reaffirmed their Baptism. What was needed was a process that was rooted in the living tradition of the Church, and relevant to the pastoral needs of adults in the 21st century that would be appropriate preparation for this sacramental moment.

*The contemporary Catechumenate is a process not a program.* It is not about simple membership in a Church, but on calling and enabling adults to be disciples of Christ. As in ancient times, it is marked by stages of growth with celebrations, or rites, within the whole worshipping community on Sunday. Like the ancient Church, the change and renewal in faith of the adults engaged in "The Way" invites the whole congregation to also do the same in their lives.

It all began with a weekend workshop three years ago presented by the Rev. Paul E. Hoffman, the author of *Faith Forming Faith*. A number of Lutheran and Episcopal congregations gathered over that weekend and became aware of the ancient roots and rites of the Catechumenate in the early church and how it addresses the needs of adults seeking faith today. *Like any journey worthy of the name, it occurs over time in stages, with rites marking 'milestones' on that journey.*

In Europe, during the 19th century, there was an energetic renewal in the study and nature of Sacred Scripture and the forms of prayer and worship in the Christian Church. Much of this renewal was the result of more



scientific methods being applied to literature, history, and society by people of faith. The liturgical renewal movement developed over a century and a half to reform Christian worship to be true to its roots and relevant to the time. The Anglican Communion was one of the Christian churches greatly touched by this renewal, and it influenced the revision of the *Book of Common Prayer*. In that renewal, the Church was called to ponder core Christian practices of the Christian community such as the Eucharist / Holy Communion and Christian Initiation / Baptism.

In the Episcopal Church, the 69th General Convention gathered in 1988 to focus on a number of concerns. One of those concerns was the meaning of Christian Initiation and renewal in our own time and culture. The challenge was to be true to our Christian roots and practice while addressing the needs of our time. A number of resolutions from that convention focused on the restoration of the Catechumenate in the Episcopal Church. Rites of the Catechumenate were formally included in the *Book of Occasional Services*. A number of resources were created

to assist the process of establishing the Catechumenate in local Episcopal congregations. A national pilot project to establish the Catechumenate in congregations occurred in the Diocese of Milwaukee to provide 'best practices' for the wider church. National and regional Episcopal gatherings were organized to assist in the establishment of the Catechumenate in local congregations and dioceses.

Today, there are a number of Episcopal churches (small and large, urban and small town) who have been engaged in the Catechumenate for decades, with the highlight being celebration of Christian Initiation at the Easter Vigil.

*So what does all of this have to do with the adults who gather faithfully on Wednesday evenings from fall to spring in a downtown Episcopal Cathedral?*

The words of "The Way" participants say it best:

"An opportunity to chew on the gospel and hear God's message for us individually and as a community" (Mary)

"A place for you to learn about

*Continued on page 4*

## "SING A NEW SONG: UNPACKING THE MYSTERY OF FAITH"

Dr. Lizette Larson-Miller, one of the facilitators at the summer NAAC Gethering in Albuquerque, offers this reflection on the upcoming event.

A number of years ago I worked in a parish in Minneapolis as the music and liturgy director in which there was a full-blown catechumenate. All the steps, all the rituals, all the engagement was celebrated with 18 catechumens and about 30 parishioners directly involved. That experience gave flesh and blood and passion to what had really only been academic study up to that point. From my vantage point of weaving in and out of the gatherings, the stories, and above all, the rituals, I watched it change the whole community. It is not just those being initiated who are trans-

formed, the whole body of Christ, both local and universal, is transformed. In light of this experience, and others since then, I am looking forward to giving two presentations at the upcoming NAAC conference in Albuquerque this summer. The first is to explore the relationship between the shape of the catechumenate in our particular traditions and parishes alongside the ecclesiology of our traditions. Articulating our ecclesiology, or theology of church, is crucial: who are we? What do we believe about ourselves as the Body of Christ? Without addressing these questions, it is difficult to reflect on what it is that catechumens are being initiated into. There are many models of ecclesiology, and each may lend itself to particular emphases in the ways we shape the catechumenate



the ways that we shape the catechumenate today.

At the end of the conference we will reflect on mystagogy as mission into a lived discipleship of all the baptized with some help from contemporary conversations in sacramental theology.

Lizette Larson-Miller  
Anglican Liturgical Consultation

## IS YOUR FAITH COMMUNITY "CATECHUMENAL"? TELL US.



The NAAC Board is striving to gather a list of congregational faith communities that self-identify as "catechumenal". Such a list could serve as a resource bank for individuals and communities looking for models as they move

along the Journey to Baptismal Living.

By "catechumenal" we mean: is the community engaging any or all of the elements that are part of the catechumenal process. Do you gather seeker, newcomers, returning baptized, and baptized seeking renewal in ways which foster discipleship rather than membership; accompanying and mentoring into the life of following Jesus more than instructing? Do you mark key moments on the faith journey with liturgical rites

when the whole faith community is gathered? Does your community understand, celebrate, and live Baptism in meaningful and life-giving ways? If any of these qualities describes your faith community we would love to know about it and create the list of "catechumenal" communities of faith.

Please send your contact information with a brief description to: [gsmith@uwo.ca](mailto:gsmith@uwo.ca)

Greg Smith  
NAAC Board Member



## FROM MEMBERSHIP TO DISCIPLESHIP

*Continued from page 2*

Christian faith and life.”(Chanze)

“A weekly gathering of adults who wish to explore faith as an adult experience.” (Larry)

“A way to connect with the church community and to engage with Scripture on a deeper level than happens on Sundays.” (Michael)

“A place to connect with other people who are thinking about their spirituality.” (Melanie)

“Leaning about this church — the Episcopal Church, and this congregation.” (Cindy)

“A satisfying meal, an opportunity to learn, meaningful conversations with others about things

that really matter in life, integration of faith and daily living, and learning to follow Christ.” (Peter)

*This article is abridged from an original article appearing in Spirit, a magazine published by the Episcopal Diocese of West Missouri.*

Larry Ehren, NAAC Vice President

## SUGGESTED CATECHUMENAL RESOURCES

The Worship Matters Studies Series examines key worship issues through studies by pastors, musicians, and lay people from throughout the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. The features include:

- Informal and insightful writing for all readers
- Study questions at the end of every chapter
- Examines vital issues in weekly worship
- Helps leaders and congregants understand and experience worship more richly

*The Three-Day Feast: Maundy Thursday, Good Friday, and Easter* by Gail Ramshaw (Author)

Recent decades have witnessed the revival of the ancient liturgies of the Three Days — Maundy Thursday, Good Friday, and the Easter Vigil. In this book Ramshaw gives a little history and a lot of

suggestions about how these services can enrich the worship life of your entire assembly.

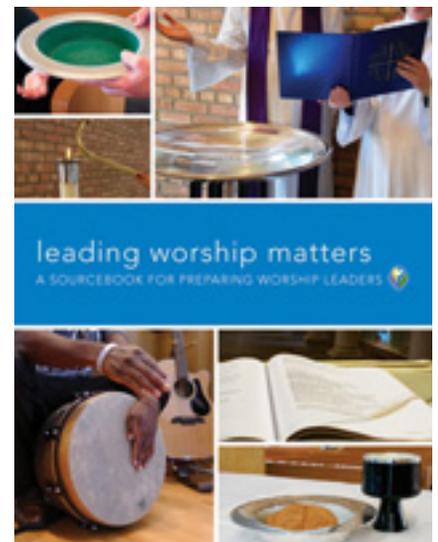
*Leading Worship Matters: A Sourcebook for Preparing Worship Leaders* by 28 Contributors

A comprehensive guide with practical, succinct, easy-to-use tools and resources to support, plan, execute, and evaluate lay worship leadership development. Includes a CD-ROM and DVD. *Leading Worship Matters* is a valuable resource for congregations that want to prepare their worship leaders for a ministry — not just a task — and that want to renew their worship life and deepen their understanding of worship as mission.

*Serving the Assembly's Worship: A Handbook for Assisting Ministers* by Christian Scharen (Author)

In this small handbook you will find a brief history of assisting

ministers in Christian worship, what makes a good assisting minister, a step-by-step walk through the role, and lots of tips and encouragement. *Serving the Assembly's Worship* invites assisting ministers to approach this role not just as a task, but as a ministry to the whole assembly.



### A Note from the Editor

Do you have a story to tell about your faith community and the catechumenate? Your story will be welcome. Send to [gsmith@uwo.ca](mailto:gsmith@uwo.ca)

NAAC Newsletter Editor: Gregory Smith  
568 Rington Crest, London, Ontario N6J 1Y8  
519.645.0554  
[Gsmith@uwo.ca](mailto:Gsmith@uwo.ca)