

COME TO CALIFORNIA FOR TRAINING EVENT

Come October the grapes will be pressed and the vineyard leaves turning color. Nearby wineries in Lodi and Napa await you. Join us for the Catechumenate Training Institute "Go Baptize, Make Disciples" in Sacramento this October 1-3 and stay after for the wine.



Learn what it means to be a discipleship congregation at the

upcoming institute being held at St. John's Lutheran Church in Sacramento. Pastors, musicians, seminarians, and lay leaders are encouraged to attend this event offered by the North American Association for the Catechumenate (NAAC). It is being co-hosted by St. John's, Trinity Episcopal Cathedral, and St. Martin's Episcopal Church.

A team composed of Episcopalians, Lutherans, and Presbyterians will lead participants through an inspirational, practical three-day training designed to introduce this ancient spiritual practice for youth and adults to their congregations. Congregational leaders already involved in the Catechumenate process are also encour-

aged to attend and find new ways to enrich this journey of faith formation.



Scholarships are available for seminarians and first call pastors. For more information, contact our registrar, Devra Betts at devra-betts@gmail.com or call her cell 702-232-8383. Go to the website www.catechumenate.org to download a brochure and/or to register online.

FROM THE NAAC BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Those of you who are involved in the Catechumenate are in a time of exploration moving to intense preparation during the season of Lent. You are on a journey of discipleship, learning what it means to live as a daily disciple of Jesus in the covenant of your baptism. This was a practice initiated by the Early Church that has been reclaimed today by many of our churches and that is transforming lives and many congregations.

The Board continues to explore a potential partnership with the Roman Catholic community since the closing of the North American Forum on the Catechumenate in

2013. For years, the Forum had provided RCIA training institutes for parish leaders with responsibility for faith formation. We hope to help fill that void by working in collaboration with local dioceses where NAAC training institutes are being held. We are excited to report that the book *Go Make Disciples: An Invitation to Baptismal Living* — now in its second or third printing — has been well received by both the Protestant and Catholic communities across the US and Canada. The book was written by members of NAAC represent-

ing all the mainline Protestant denominations in consultation with the former executive director of the Forum, Jim Schellman.

2015 is shaping up to be another busy and rewarding year for the North American Association for the Catechumenate. We are blessed with good leadership on the Board and a cadre of willing, passionate volunteers. We hope to see many of you in Baltimore this coming summer!

Your Servant in Baptismal Living
Rick Rouse, President

NAAC ANNUAL GATHERING IN BALTIMORE

Congregational leaders who envision their ministry to be “making disciples for the sake of the world” will want to attend the 2015 Annual Gathering in Baltimore to be held July 30-Aug. 1, 2015. Popular authors Jessicah Duckworth and Paul Hoffman will speak on the theme “TRANSFORMING CONGREGATIONS THROUGH SPIRITUAL PRACTICE: CREATING A DISCIPLESHIP COMMUNITY.” In addition to great speakers, the event offers practical workshops, inspirational worship, and an opportunity to network with friends and colleagues of various denominations from across North America.

Washington DC is only about an hour’s drive from Baltimore so plan to come early or stay later and take in many of the wonderful attractions our nation’s capital has to offer including the Smithsonian institutes, Washington Monument, the Capital, and moving memorials to Lincoln, Jefferson, King, World War I and II, and Viet Nam. Baltimore also has plenty to offer with its beautiful waterfront, shops, and restaurants. Free time is scheduled each afternoon to enjoy the area and the grounds of the beautiful Bon Secours Conference Center. Airport choices include Baltimore, Dulles, and National.

Rev. Dr. Jessicah Duckworth is currently Program Director for the Lilly Endowment Religion Division. Previously, she served as assistant professor of congregational and community care leadership at Luther Seminary in St. Paul, MN. Duckworth is an ordained pastor in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. She



has done extensive research focused on Christian practices that sustain vibrant congregational life. Her academic work has attended to the spiritual questions of young adults and ways that Christian churches can reach out to a new generation. She recently published a book on strengthening the relationship between newcomers and established members through congregation spiritual practices. It is entitled *Wide Welcome: How the Unsettling Presence of Newcomers Can Save the Church*.

Rev. Paul Hoffman was Lead Pastor at Phinney Ridge Lutheran Church in Seattle for 17 years where he led The WAY, the Phinney Ridge Lutheran embodiment of the catechumenate. Paul brings a wealth of experience from leading The WAY at his congregation in Seattle for 17 years. His story is captured in the recent *Faith Forming Faith* (Cascade Books, 2012) and in *Faith Shaping Ministry* (Cascade Books, 2013). He has worked ecumenically and led workshops and training events in the US and Europe. He has taught at



Oxford, Paris, St. Petersburg, and in local congregations in North America.

The Annual Gathering is for pastors, seminarians, educators, musicians, and other parish leaders, and is sponsored by the North American Association for the Catechumenate, an ecumenical organization dedicated to serving pastors and congregations of all denominations in the US and Canada.

For more information and to register online, go to the website: www.catechumenate.org. For scholarship information, contact Registrar Deva Betts at deva-betts@gmail.com or call 702-232-8383.



THE LENTEN SCRUITINIES BY BRYON HANSON

Theologian Robert Jenson once remarked that if Lent was practiced as a time of baptismal preparation, the season would, once again, have a purpose. Indeed, I recall growing up in the church when it seemed that the focus of the season was an extended prelude to Holy Week and the Passion of Christ. The original intent of forming people into the mind of Christ in preparation for their participation in the paschal mystery at Easter seemed all but lost. Over the years we have witnessed a slow but steady shift. Thanks to the Revised Common Lectionary, the liturgical renewal movement, and the reemergence of the Adult Catechumenate, we can conclude with Dr. Jenson that Lent indeed has a purpose.

Lent is pivotal in the overall process of the Catechumenate. We are recovering the wisdom and practice of the ancient church. In the catechumenal process Lent is a time of "Enlightenment and Purification." It is, by nature, reflective, introspective and internal. By no means, however, is this leg in the journey private. For baptismal candidates or those preparing for affirmation of baptism or confirmation, the journey is accompanied by spon-

sors, fellow sojourners in the process and a community of faith surrounding them with their prayers, blessing and support. The character of the season is a kind of intense preparation for the Easter Vigil when the candidates will renounce evil and so turn to a brand new life in Christ by stepping into the waters of a brand new world. The earliest practices are beginning to inform present day practice.

However, we need not find ourselves beholden to merely imitating ancient patterns. First, we live in the 21st century, not the fourth. Our context is vastly different. Secondly, recent scholarship has revealed a variety of initiatory patterns in the patristic period of the church, not unlike our own. They reveal a "Plurality of Particularities."¹

The Scrutinies practiced during Lent arose out of the examination of the lifestyles of baptismal candidates to assess their readiness for baptism. The exorcisms and prayers would last several days or every day in some places and would be less prominent in other places. In the Canon of Hippolytus a single scrutiny before the day of baptism itself was practiced in which the candidate was

asked if he or she visited the sick, despised pride, and embraced humility.² Augustine combined the handing over of the Creed and the Lord's Prayer along with the scrutinies during Lent while his mentor Ambrose handed over the Creed on Palm Sunday. Theodore of Mopsuestia included the renunciation of evil right before Baptism and the Gelasian Sacramentary placed the scrutinies on the third, fourth and fifth Sundays in Lent.³ The Roman Catholic Rite of Christian Initiation (RCIA) seems to have based their approach on this latter sequence.

Since Lent is a time to purify the mind and heart of besetting sins and to be enlightened or illumined with the light of Christ, the scrutinies are meant to "uncover, then heal all that is weak, defective or sinful in the hearts of the elect [the catechumens having been elected and thus signing the book of enrollment on the First Sunday in Lent], to bring them out, then strengthen all that is upright, strong and good." The Creed is presented on the Third Sunday in Lent and the Lord's Prayer on the fifth Sunday with the expectation that the newly baptized would recite them back at a later time.⁴

Like the RCIA, Protestants have followed a similar tract. In the *Book of Occasional Services* 1994, the Episcopalians commend public acts, private disciplines of faith, examination of conscience, and prayer so that the candidates are "spiritually, emotionally ready for baptism."⁵ A form of the scrutiny in the prayers that occur during Lent read: "Deliver your servant from the power of evil and illu-



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mine them with the light of your promise.”⁶ The Lutherans, on the Fourth Sunday in Lent, implore God to “crush the power of the devil, protect your people from the evils of the world. Preserve us from sin and error, that with all the saints and angels we may live in joy . . .”⁷ These rites, Episcopal and Lutheran, also allow for the presentation of the Creed on the Third Sunday and the handing over of the Lords’ Prayer or worship book on the Fifth Sunday.

In Rites developed for the United Methodist Church, the prayers based upon the ancient scrutinies are called “Examination of Conscience,” described as “times of grace and prayer. They are never to be occasions for probing or manipulation. The Spirit can and must be trusted to do the work of conversion.” The prayer over the candidates invites prayer for the candidates as prayer to God, “who knows (the names of the candidates are spoken) better than they know themselves.” Then the prayers ask that Jesus will illumine the darkness that they may be free to serve God, deliver them from the power of sin that enslaves them, and ask the Lord to “search their hearts and wills, and to purify their conscience of that which is not ready to be joined in Christ in loving God and neighbor.” The bids of the prayer are interspersed with silence.⁸

Among Protestants you will find debate around the appropriateness of the scrutinies or prayers of exorcism. Some may wonder why their tradition would wade into catechumenal waters and observe that the kind of moral and

spiritual development practiced in the Catechumenate, along with the scrutiny prayers bear a strong resemblance to “works righteousness” and that sin cannot be expunged from anyone fully for as Luther succinctly stated, “the old Adam may drown in baptism but that old Adam is a mighty good swimmer.” However, post-Reformation objections to a perception of these ancient rites would find great sympathy among such ancient Catechumenate practitioners as Augustine who, in teaching the rites to catechumens would emphasize conversion as the work of God and Christ as the great liberator who shattered the shackles of the devil.⁹ And in the spirit of Augustine, do we not believe that repentance is a lifelong return to baptism and the wellspring of forgiveness? Forming disciples isn’t contrary to the good news of God’s never-ending love and in the rites and process of the Catechumenate; God is indeed the primary actor.

Given the “plurality of particularities,” both ancient and modern, how does the practice and wisdom of the ancient church inform current practice?

We cannot replicate the past. Nor is it desirable. Still, the practice of self-reflection leading to renunciation of evil is powerful for the catechumen and affirmer alike. For in such a practice, we open ourselves to the work of the Spirit.

In our contemporary context we can help those in the catechumenal process to ask these questions: What am I called to leave behind that is destructive in my life? Where am I being called

to change? Where am I in need of healing in my life? More pointedly, where is God in my life and what is God asking me to do or change? Finally, we may ask the catechumens to ask God for healing and direction.

The Year A readings in Lent are a perfect complement to such questions. You might consider using them each year. Should you elect to use the appointed Gospel readings during years B and C, at least the Year A reading could be used in the small group component of the catechumenal process. The story of the Samaritan woman (John 4) helps candidates identify their lack and their thirst for God. The healing of the Blind Man (John 9) identifies our need for illumination. The raising of Lazarus points to our need for conversion and new life that is wrought only by God. The handing over of the Creed forms the candidates in belief, not in the sense of mastering intellectual propositions but toward a deeper trust and dwelling in the triune God. The handing over of a prayer book or worship book or Lord’s Prayer assists the candidates in their vocation of prayer.

How might these rites be done in your context? How might reflection occur with the Creed and Lord’s Prayer? What needs to be exorcised in us? In what manner might the scrutinies assist persons in their journey to renunciation and profession of faith at the Easter Vigil?

Michael Marchal speaks of exorcising our contemporary demons: ideologies, idols, materialism, sexism, consumerism, nation-

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alism, militarism, and racism. He proposes the use of imagination as a bridge to receiving Christ. Using the Year A readings, he contends that Christ may be light and water and resurrection for us if we pray these texts with imagination. Using Ignatian prayer as his foundation, he suggests that candidate place themselves in these stories.¹⁰ From their engagement with these stories he has developed a way for the candidates to write intercessory prayers based on their personal desires for healing. These are then incorporated into the prayers of the entire community at the Sunday Eucharist. Thus, the entire community participates in the process of forming persons in faith. Marchal contends that we cannot pretend that the assembly is necessarily holier or better formed than those seeking baptism. "I submit that the credible contemporary model should now be sinful Church interceding for the renewal of all her members . . . perhaps the scrutinies are not just for those in the RCIA [catechumenate] but for all believers on their journey to Easter renewal."¹¹ Indeed, the assembly surrounds the candidates as fellow sojourners in a life-long journey of walking with Christ.

Allow an example such as this to spark your imagination.

And ask: How do we take the Lenten journey together? What form might small group reflection take during Lent? Might the sponsors and candidates take on a discipline of prayer, fasting, and works of love together? Can the true needs of the candidates be taken to prayer in the worship of

the assembly?

Perhaps the catechumenal sessions will include reflection on the Lenten rites (the Rite of Enrollment, blessing prayers, handing over the Creed and Lord's Prayer). The Year A readings may be read in the style of *lectio divina* followed by questions that probe the heart. Perhaps each session would conclude with an evening prayer or Compline service with that focus on the Sunday readings or the Creed and Lord's Prayer.

St. Augustine requested that his catechumens memorize the Creed: "Say it . . . no one writes the Creed so it may be read. You will believe what you hear yourself saying and your lips will repeat what you believe." Similarly, in memorizing the Lord's Prayer, he said that the candidates would know who to call upon. The simple act of memorization could be a profound spiritual exercise, consistent with Augustine's mantra that Christ is written on the heart and that the aim of the Christian life is nothing less than loving God and neighbor as one's self.

God has given us great resources to form disciples – the wisdom and practice of the ancient church and the contemporary context in which we live. Moreover, God has given us the gift of imagination and discernment to determine how these gifts intersect. We have been given a "plurality of particularities," both ancient and modern. Use them well.

Bryon Hanson is pastor of Phinney Ridge Lutheran Church in Seattle, Washington. He is also a past board member and President of NAAC.

NOTES

¹ The title of the workshop led by Kyle Schiefelbein in a workshop at the 2011 NAAC gathering in San Francisco. See the power point presentation on the NAAC Website. He clearly demonstrates how the ancient rites varied according to place and context. One could say the same about today's Christian climate.

² Maxwell Johnson, *The Rites of Christian Initiation: Their Evolution and Interpretation*, Pueblo: Liturgical Press, Collegeville, 1999, p. 117.

³ See Shiefelbein presentation.

⁴ Maxwell Johnson, *The Rites of Christian Initiation*, Collegeville MN: The Liturgical Press, 2007, p. 310.

⁵ *The Book of Occasional Services* 1994, Church Publishing House, New York, p. 116.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 126.

⁷ *Go Make Disciples: An Invitation to Baptismal Living*, Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg-Fortress, 2012. The catechumenal rites in this resource build upon the rites first published in *Welcome to Christ*, Augsburg-Fortress, 1997.

⁸ Daniel Benedict, *Come to the Waters*, Nashville, TN: Discipleship Resources, 2002, p.118

⁹ William Harmless, *Augustine and the Catechumenate*, Collegeville, MN: Pueblo, The Liturgical Press, p. 268.

¹⁰ Michael H. Marchal, *Toward the Table: Ritual Moments in Christian Initiation*, Franklin Park, IL: World Library Publications, 2013, pp. 52-52

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 63.

¹² Harmless, p. 276.

¹³ 287.

BOOK REVIEW

Daily Prayer for All Seasons, 2014;
Church Publishing, Inc., NY

The Book of Common Prayer includes Morning Prayer, Evening Prayer and Compline services for those who want to pray the major parts of the Daily Office. The BCP also includes a section of "Daily Devotions for Individuals and Families" that allows those of us who cannot find the time to pray the Office a way to pray much briefer forms of Morning Prayer, Evening Prayer and Compline.

In *Daily Prayer for All Seasons* The Episcopal Church has found a middle ground between the full Office services and those set in the "Daily Devotions." As is said in the Introduction, *Daily Prayer for All Seasons* provides a holy – and wholly realistic – way to order our days, no matter how full they seem" (p vii). The book has sections for each of the liturgical seasons of the year. The Season after Pentecost or "Ordinary Time" gets two sections because of the

length of the season. Each season in turn has themes associated with *Lauds, Prime, Terce, Sext, None, Vespers, Compline, and Vigil*. While this regimen of eight hours of the day may seem as rigorous as praying the Liturgy of the Hours set forth in the BCP, it isn't. Each service is one or two pages in length with short canticles, scripture passages, and prayers.

As we progress through the liturgical season in our catechumenal journey, these services can be very useful. For example, in our journey through Lent there are brief services focused on praise, discernment, wisdom, perseverance, love, forgiveness, trust and being watchful. While each of these is associated in *Daily Prayer* with one of the eight hours listed above (*Lauds, Prime, etc.*), they can certainly be used in any circumstance where you find them appropriate.

If you find this description of its resources confusing or complex, the book is neither. This is all the



more reason to purchase a copy and discover its richness. *Daily Prayer for All Seasons* is a wonderful resource when you are looking for a prayer or service to open or close a catechumenate meeting. I recommend it for all catechumenal ministers' libraries.

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