

## WE ARE AN EASTER PEOPLE

The Easter Vigil has come and gone, but the spirit of the Resurrection lingers on in the life of the baptized people of God. The journey of faith formation does not end on Pentecost Sunday, but continues in daily ministry and baptismal living. We are continually being shaped and formed to be more like Christ. As such we are called to be "little Christs" to our neighbors, as in word and deed we proclaim to all around us: "Christ is risen. He is risen indeed!"

The North American Association for the Catechumenate is all about living in the promise of Easter, sharing the hope that is ours in Jesus. We are pleased to offer resources, support, and training for all of our denominational partners whose congregations desire to live in the spirit of the Resurrection. Special thanks to board members, Rev. Martha Maier (ELCA from Washington State) and Rev. Jay Koyle (Anglican from

Ontario), who keep the hope alive on an ongoing basis by sharing with us the work and promise of NAAC through social media (Facebook) and Constant Contact (e-news). Also thank you to Jerry Paré (Episcopal from California) for his excellent work as editor of our quarterly newsletter.

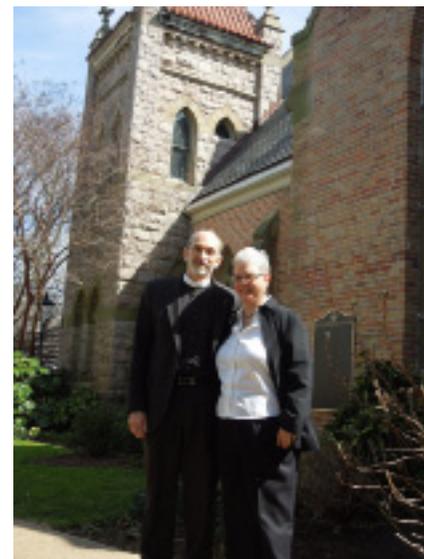
I have just returned from an exciting site visit to St. John's Episcopal Church in Portsmouth, Virginia. This congregation is steeped in the catechumenate and eager to share with others how it has enlivened their parish. They will be hosting NAAC's next regional congregational training event planned for Sept. 25-27. (See related article for more details.)

And let us not forget the upcoming NAAC Annual Gathering and Catechumenate Training Event to be held in Vancouver BC, Canada August 5-8. (See the separate article in this issue.)

Congratulations to board member Teresa Stricklen Eisenlohr

(Presbyterian USA from Kentucky) who is living out the Easter promise. She lost her spouse a couple of years ago and just remarried this winter. Joy abounds!

Blessings of the Risen Christ,  
Rick Rouse, President  
on behalf of the NAAC  
Board of Directors



*Rev. Derek Harbin and Rev. Clifford King Harbin, hosts for the fall training institute*

## "THE VIGIL'S OVER, NOW WHAT?"

After leading a congregation through eighteen yearlong cycles of baptismal preparation, I have to tell you the truth. Sustaining the energy and maintaining the ancients' pattern of the Catechumenate after Easter is a challenging task. That said, nothing could

be more important than honoring the wisdom of our forebears in the faith and learning from their example of the importance of mystagogy's opportunities in The Great Fifty Days of Easter.

"I'm baptized. Now what?" is the question that this final stage of

Catechumenal preparation is intended to unravel. Formed in faith through the prior three stages, baptized with great beauty and flourish at the conclusion of The Three Days, the newly baptized now look to the Church and the

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## “THE VIGIL’S OVER . . .”

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formational process to begin to understand what life as a baptized child of God will mean in their day-to-day world. While the prior stages’ emphases have necessarily been on the first three of the church’s practices of worship, scripture, and prayer, the period of mystagogy begins to open for the newly baptized the fourth of those practices: works of love.

It is a question of vocation.

“Now what?” “How am I to live out my baptismal calling in the world in which I live each day?” “What will it mean to be a disciple in my various roles such as nurse or lawyer, spouse or partner, parent, seeker of justice, citizen of community, nation and world? In *The Cross in Our Context*, Douglas John Hall reminds us: “faith is a journey toward the world.”<sup>1</sup> With the waters of baptism still fresh on their skin and the scented oils of anointing still fragrant, there is no better time than the season of Easter for the newly baptized, his or her sponsor and catechist, along with the entire assembly to consider, “what does our baptism mean?”

The wisdom of post-Easter formation is grounded as far back in our shared Christian history as Cyril of Jerusalem, (ca. 350-387 C.E.). His rationale for expounding on the mysteries of the church’s rites that the candidates have already experienced is this:

*I knew well that visual testimony is more trustworthy than mere hearsay, and therefore I awaited the chance of finding you more mendable to my words, so that out of your personal experience I could lead you into the*

*brighter and more fragrant meadow of Paradise on earth.*<sup>2</sup>

Accordingly, reflecting on the experiences of the Church’s ritual life form the foundation of post-Easter conversation and formation. But seeing both the rites and the proclaimed Word as nourishment for one’s vocation in the world is the ultimate goal of formation in The Great Fifty Days. By continuing to speak and listen to one another as newcomers and long-standing disciples, those gathered draw on the wealth of each other’s encounter with the Living Christ to deepen their own walk of baptismal living in the world.

And what a magnificent feast the post-Easter texts serve up! Undergirding the weekly conversations are the age-old stories of

- Thomas’ face to face encounter with the Resurrected Christ,
- Peter’s encounter with Tabitha in her vocation among the widows of Joppa,
- John’s deep conviction of love for one another as a sign of love of God,
- Peter’s assurance to house slaves of their inheritance as God’s own people.

With these rich texts and the robust life-giving liturgies of the Easter season, those just raised from the waters are given the opportunity to put their baptisms to work in the world for the sake of the Gospel. They do this just as their brothers and sisters in the faith who have walked this way for centuries before them.

I’m not going to lie to you. Sustaining the momentum and commitment of the Catechu-

menal gathering following the Vigil is not an easy task. In the Pacific Northwest the rains have stopped, the sun begins to shine later and later in the day, the gardens beckon, as do the waterways and late spring ski slopes. What once was a mid-winter cocoon for meal fellowship, conversation, study and prayer at 5 p.m. on a Sunday evening does not have the same allure in May that it had in January.

Yet the discipline of this practice sets an important tone for the baptized life in the real world once even this period of faith formation draws to a close. Baptized living is challenging, is it not? There are temptations to do less than our best, are there not? Yet without a sense of vocation, and without its disciplines and practices, baptism can be little more than an isolated event culminating in unbridled joy at Easter’s feast. The opportunity to gather with the faithful at the morning assembly for the nourishment of Word and Table and then to consider in the safety and security of one’s small group, “I’m baptized. Now what?” is an opportunity that those of us who lead in this sacred process should neither short-change nor over-look. Those who have been formed for baptism at our hand – and who have formed us in return – deserve the accompaniment and encouragement that this final stage of the Catechumenal process affords. This is joyful vocation of all the baptized who learn and relearn what it means to live our faith as a journey

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## TRAINING EVENT COMES TO HISTORIC VIRGINIA THIS FALL

St. John's Episcopal Church in Portsmouth, VA will host the next regional Catechumenate Training Institute "Go, Baptize, Make Disciples" offered by the North American Association for the Catechumenate (NAAC). Located in historic Old Towne and blocks away from the waterfront, the congregation has much to offer, including a faith community steeped in this ancient adult faith formation process designed to equip disciples for baptismal living. For a video of their Vigil go to [youtube.com](http://youtube.com) and seek St. John's Portsmouth Easter Vigil.

An ecumenical team of Episcopalians, Lutherans, and Presbyterians will serve as presenters, small group facilitators, and worship leaders. One participant who attended last year's regional training event in Houston remarked: "It was a terrific learning experience that was also spiritually enriching. Lots of prayers and thought went into the event which was beautifully executed." The institute is offered for those new to the catechumenate and is also for seasoned practitioners who wish to further enrich their congregation's experience. Highlights of the event include:

- An immersion into the rites and rituals of this ancient Christian practice.
- Meet in small groups and experience your own spiritual renewal.
- Discover tools that will enable your parish to move from a climate of membership to discipleship.
- Learn how to introduce this journey of making disciples to your own congregation.

•Participants are encouraged to come as a parish team so you can learn together.

The event is endorsed by the following church leaders and others who encourage your attendance:

- Rev. Teresa Stricklen Eisenlohr, Associate Director of Worship, Presbyterian Church USA
- Rev. Herman Hollerith, IV, Bishop, Episcopal Diocese of Southern Virginia
- Rev. James F. Mauney, Bishop, Virginia Synod (ELCA)
- Jim Schellman, former Executive Director of the North American Forum (RCIA)

Housing for the conference is available at the nearby Renaissance Hotel on the Portsmouth/Norfolk Harbor. A special rate of \$99 a night is being offered to participants from Wednesday, September 24 to Sunday, September 28. While the institute is Thursday thru mid-day Saturday, participants are encouraged to come early and stay late to enjoy

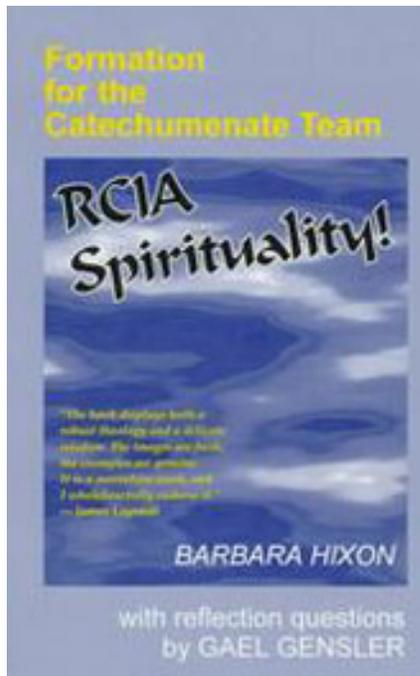
the rich history of the area. For example, Jamestown, Williamsburg, and other historic sites are only a short driving distance away. Reservations must be made by Sept. 1st in order to receive the discounted rate. Register online at the NAAC website or call Marriott reservations at 888-839-1775 or the hotel directly at 757-673-3000. User conference code: St. John's Episcopal Church.

To register for the training institute, go to the NAAC website at [www.catechumenate.org](http://www.catechumenate.org) where you can either register for the event online or download a brochure with registration form. Early bird discount of \$50 off the conference registration fee of \$270 is available through July 1st. The registration fee includes all meals, training materials, and the program. For scholarship and other information, contact registrar Devra Betts. Email: [devra-betts@gmail.com](mailto:devra-betts@gmail.com). Cell phone: 702-232-8383.

Hope to see you in Virginia!



## REVIEW OF RCIA SPIRITUALITY . . .



Barbara Hixon's *RCIA Spirituality* is a jewel as a resource guide for formation of catechumenate teams. In it Hixon offers us reflections and questions that can provide all members of a catechumenate team insights into their ministry as well help discern the gifts of each team member. The reflections also recognize that catechumenal ministry requires a certain mentality out of which the catechumenate can be truly Christ-initiating. Hixon guides us through various aspects of that mentality as they pertain to the stages and rites of the catechumenate. "Mentality" is a milieu that colors our whole view of things and determines which way we have the courage to lean" (p. 6).

"RCIA," the "Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults," refers to two aspects of the catechumenate in the Roman Catholic Church. First, it refers to the entire process of

catechumenal ministry. Second, it refers to the specific published document that contains the rites and rubrics used in the Roman Catholic Church for Christian initiation. If you do not have a copy of the RCIA, you ought to get one (Liturgy Training Publications is a good source — [www.ltp.org/c-35-rituals.aspx](http://www.ltp.org/c-35-rituals.aspx)). It is a valuable resource for ministry in Christian initiation. The rites, rubrics, and numerous commentaries provide useful insights into the catechumenate process. The RCIA also contains rich nuggets like the *Ephphetha* rite for use on Holy Saturday morning. *RCIA Spirituality* can help lead you through this book that otherwise may be off-putting to many Protestants.

Hixon published *RCIA Spirituality* in 1989. Jim Dunning, guru of catechumenate ministry development in the United States, was still alive and recommended the work. It was birthed with the North American Forum on the Catechumenate as midwife. I have hesitated to write this review for several years because the book is out of print. But an increasing number of copies are available through the wonder of the internet. I strongly recommend that you take time to seek and find.

*RCIA Spirituality* uses two main sources for the reflections: Scripture and the RCIA. Of these, Scripture is the primary resource. Hixon does recommend that you have a copy of the RCIA with you when you use her text.

*RCIA Spirituality* has five parts – one for each of the periods or stages of the catechumenate

journey and a part that focuses specifically on Baptism. Each part of the work is a reflection on a chosen scripture passage or story that reflects the spirit of that period. Each examines the "mentality" associated with the specific period.

Hixon does not provide a "mentality" chapter for the Period of "Purification and Enlightenment" (the RCIA term) or "intense preparation" (the term used in *Go Make Disciples*, Augsburg Fortress, 2012 to name the process during this period). Here the focal issues for reflection are sin and salvation in the context of purification and enlightenment.

Other chapters in each part include "The Jesus Approach," "The Rite Application," and the "Rite Mentality." The "Jesus Approach" is not a WWJD approach. Rather it is Hixon's commentary on the particular Gospel story associated with that part. The "Rite Application" and "Rite Mentality" chapters focus on the rites for each period. This is similar to the strong recommendation for those involved in other ordination processes to read and reflect on the rites and rubrics associated with ordination. The similarity is no accident given that baptism is the primal sacrament of ordination.

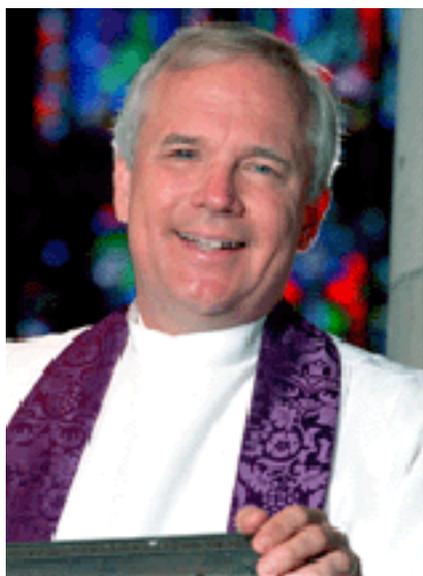
And now . . . the real jewel of *RCIA Spirituality* — Gael Gensler provides reflection questions for each chapter. These are excellent for fostering discussion among team members. Indeed I have found the ones pertaining to the Emmaus story (the Gospel story

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## ANNUAL GATHERING IN VANCOUVER, CANADA

“Reclaiming our Baptismal Calling: Discipleship in a Post-Christian Culture” is the theme of this year’s Annual Gathering to be held in Vancouver, Canada.

The event is being held August 5 — 8 on the campus of the University of British Columbia in beautiful Vancouver, BC. Registration/check-in is available beginning Tuesday at 1:30 pm and concludes Friday at noon. The event will feature keynote speaker Bishop Will Willimon of Duke University and National Bishop Susan Johnson (Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada) as preacher for our closing worship. In addition, the gathering will provide a variety of practical workshops offered by various church leaders (with a track for beginners and one for experienced practitioners). And this year — for the first time at an annual gathering — NAAC is also including a full catechumenate



*Bishop Willimon, the author of sixty books, leads 157,000 Methodists and 792 pastors in North Alabama. For twenty years he was Professor of Christian Ministry at Duke University, Durham, North Carolina.*

training event as part of the three-and-half-day conference, complete with small groups and worship rites.

About our Keynote Speaker: Will Willimon is a retired Bishop in the United Methodist Church who teaches at the Theological School at Duke University. Perhaps best known for the book he co-authored with Stan Hauerwas, *Resident Aliens*, Bishop Willimon has authored numerous publications including *Sinning Like a Christian: A New Look at the Seven Deadly Sins* and *Remembering Who You Are: Baptism as a Model for Christian Life*. Always timely and provocative, he will address the challenge of living as a faithful disciple in a post-Christian world and how the church needs to radically change its focus if it is to be a vital training center for the community of the baptized people of God.

Modern, in-suite housing is being provided on campus at the Carey Centre nearby to St. Andrews Chapel where all plenary sessions will be held. Worship will be held next door in the lovely Epiphany Chapel. Registration for the event includes lodging, meals, training materials, and program. Special rate for non-participant spouses is available. Save \$50 on your early bird registration through July 1st. To register go to the NAAC website at [www.catechumenate.org](http://www.catechumenate.org) where you can register online for the gathering and also download a brochure with registration form as well as other information about the event. A limited number of scholarships are available to

seminarians and first year pastors. Application deadline is July 1. For more information contact Devra Betts, Registrar.

Email: [devrabetts@gmail.com](mailto:devrabetts@gmail.com) Cell: 702-232-8383.



*Susan Johnson, the National Bishop of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada, will preach at the closing Eucharist. Susan is an honorary canon of Christ’s Church Cathedral in Hamilton, Ontario.*

*She also serves on the executive of the North American Region of the Lutheran World Federation.*

The catechumenate is a process of faith formation and spiritual development leading to baptism or affirmation of baptism. It is ideal for twenty-first century people who may have little or no previous association with the Christian faith. The catechumenate helps people develop the disciplines of faith in their lives: corporate worship, the study of Scripture, prayer, and baptismal living. It is process-oriented rather than program-oriented, lay-led

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## ANNUAL GATHERING

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rather than clergy dominated, and focused on formation in Christ rather than information about Christ. Through the catechumenate, adults on a spiritual quest are offered an apprenticeship in the life of faith and those already baptized are aided in the deepening of their faith and com-

mitment.

The North American Association for the Catechumenate (NAAC) is an ecumenical organization that seeks to promote and nurture the catechumenal process in order that the whole faith community might fulfill Christ's commission to make disciples, baptizing and teaching

all people. Member denominations include the Anglican Church of Canada, the Episcopal Church, Evangelical Lutheran Church in American, Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada, Presbyterian Church — USA, Reformed Church in America, the United Church in Canada, and the United Methodist Church.



The Carey Centre is the location for the Gathering and is located on the campus of the University of British Columbia. The Centre is within a few minutes' walk of most facilities, including libraries, aquatic centre, cafeterias, bookstores, etc., and it is also in close proximity to University Village with stores, bank, and restaurants.

## BOOK REVIEW RCIA SPIRITUALITY . . .

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Hixon associates with *mystagogia*) good for a meeting with our neophytes.

Are you in the process of forming a catechumenate team? Do you have a team and are looking for discussion material on the pe-

riods and rites? Are you planning a team retreat? Do you want a tool to help you in your personal formation as a catechumenate minister? *RCIA Spirituality; Formation for the Catechumenate Team* is an excellent resource for all of these.

*RCIA Spirituality* by Barbara Hixon and Gael Gensler. Resource Publications: San Jose, CA, 1989

Review by Jerry Paré  
Catechumenate Director  
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Sacramento, CA

## "THE VIGIL'S OVER . . ."

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toward the world.

Paul E. Hoffman  
18 March 2014

*tian Initiation* (Collegeville, The Liturgical Press, 1999), p. 94.

Paul Hoffman is Pastor Emeritus of Phinney Ridge Lutheran Church,

Seattle, Washington. He has been a long time supporter of NAAC and writes extensively on the catechumenate.

### NOTES

1 Douglas John Hall, *The Cross in Our Context* (Minneapolis, Augsburg, 2003), 55.

2 Maxwell E. Johnson, *The Rites of Chris-*

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