

Discipleship: It Takes One to Make One

By Lynn Kickingbird

Keeping the Great Commission the main thing, the 2013 Mission Festival took place Nov. 7-9 at Upper Arlington Lutheran Church in Hilliard, Ohio, where some 100 clergy and lay missional leaders gathered for inspiring teaching and preaching, uplifting worship, small groups, workshops and fellowship. The festival was co-sponsored by Lutheran CORE and the North American Lutheran Church.



Participants in the 2013 Mission Festival pose for a group photo.

How do you make disciples who can make other disciples?

This was the question being asked, chewed upon, and prayed about throughout the festival. And the answer is: you don't; people don't; and even churches don't. It is a gift from Christ through the Holy Spirit's power. But Christians can do some things to increase the likelihood that we will be called to be obedient to the Great Commission. Many of these are highlighted in Acts 2:42-47, the scriptural underpinning for the plenary sessions, workshops and small-group work during the almost three days together.

Plenary presenters were NALC Bishop John Bradosky speaking on the role of *Power, Love and Discipline* in making disciples, and Pastor Chuck Lindquist, Director of World Mission Prayer League, who talked about the crucial role *Nurturing Community* plays in making disciples. Lindquist also spoke about *Prayer*.

Workshops included: *Discipling People Life to Life* (Bill Mowry of The Navigators); *Engaging Global*

Mission (Pastor Chuck Lindquist and Pastor Didi Panzo); *Small Groups as a Strategy for Evangelism and Church Planting* (Pastor Stéphane Kalonji); *House Churches* (Pastor Gemechis Buba); *The Disciple-making Pastor and Team* (Pastor Ray Scheck and Valerie Hobbs); *Discipleship Networks* (Pastor Paul Borg); *Ministry in Eastern Europe* (Bill Nordvall, East European Missions Network, and missionaries Paul and Lea Eldred); and *Mobilizing Confessing Lutherans for Evangelical Renewal* (Pastor Steve Shipman, Lutheran CORE).

Highlights from Presentations

Bishop Bradosky began his first session dealing with power by defining discipleship as "a process inspired by the Holy Spirit by which Jesus calls ordinary people, His followers, to be extraordinary leaders of His Church." Jesus begins by calling His followers to walk in His direction. He then teaches them what the Kingdom of Heaven is like, ministers

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to the needs of others, and encourages them to be living examples — earthly witnesses to the power on high. This is made immeasurably easier after His resurrection through the power of the Holy Spirit.

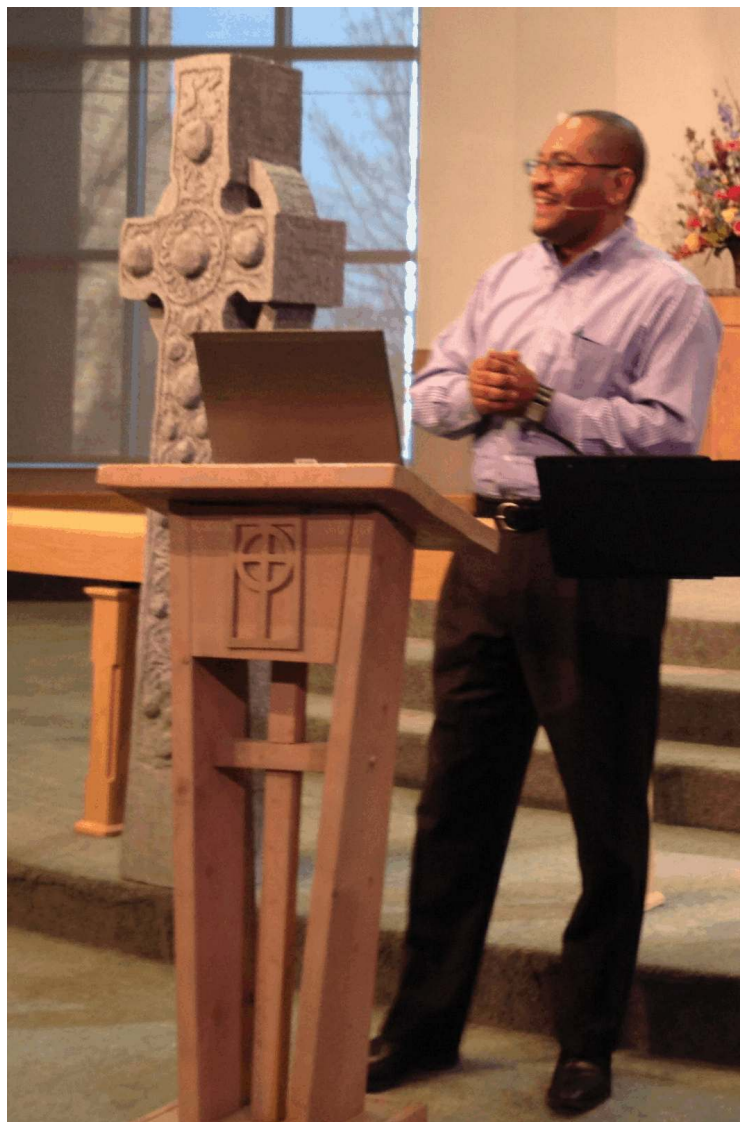
“God bookends the Great Commission with the constant presence of His power,” said Bishop Bradosky, referring to Matthew 28: “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me ... surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.”

How do we tap into this power? Discipline, training and mentoring with accountability, and prayer and obedience to the Word of God are essential. Bishop Bradosky suggested we are not “plugged into” this power because power brings responsibility and accountability. Perhaps, as another speaker proposed, we’re scared like Peter, or we just don’t want to go! The Bishop charged all attendees to connect to a “coaching buddy” to help them grow and assess their own personal power as a disciple of Christ. Worksheets with questions and practical steps were handed out to help guide the development of these relationships.

In his session dealing with *love*, Bishop Bradosky asked the question, “How many times have we said ‘no’ to the Holy Spirit?” He pointed out that somehow Christians have bought into 20th century psychology by describing God’s love for us as “unconditional.” “Unconditional love,” he said, “is not Biblical.”

Biblical *hesed*, or covenantal love, is built on expectations that show another person that they are truly valued. *Agape* is steadfast, unsentimental love that puts the best interest of the other first. “Loving the undeserving without fear of rejection is the kind of love Christ calls us to,” he said. “The Great Commandment is essential in fulfilling the Great Commission,” he continued.

How can we grow into this kind of love? Such Christian love can only be developed within a *nurturing community*. Pastor Chuck Lindquist discussed how we can build an Acts 2 community where people bear each other’s burdens, show hospitality to strangers, are humble, and break bread, pray and worship together.



Pastor Gemechis Buba, NALC Assistant to the Bishop for Missions, teaches at the Mission Festival.

Drawing examples from 2 Corinthians 14-20 and the ministry of World Mission Prayer League, Pastor Lindquist stressed that a nurturing community doesn’t come about by *doing* things. “It is a *gift* of God.” A nurturing community “learns who it is by the Word of God,” which teaches that Christ calls us to be His Body on earth. As such, we are His ambassadors (disciple-makers) who “no longer regard people from a human point of view” but as redeemed by Christ. We cannot remain “huddled and cuddled communities ... concerned about boundaries ... who only talk among ourselves.” Lindquist said that nurturing community follows believing God’s Word and doing mission.

Training, *discipline*, and accountability are essential to making disciples. In his third session, Bishop

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Bradosky described discipline as “learning that molds character.” He said that the goal of discipline is righteousness. Discipline takes place through instruction, training, upbringing and following. “Only a transformed person can be an agent of transformation in others.” That means discipling leaders recognize the gap in themselves, accept discipline, and seek mentors to whom they are accountable if they are to train and mentor new disciples.

Small Groups

The plenary sessions were processed through discussion, prayer and scripture reading in small groups that gave participants opportunities to reflect and share. Many “coaching buddy” partnerships were formed within the groups that many described as an important festival highlight.

A Bold Goal for 2017: 1517 House Churches!

In the final presentation, Pastor Gemechis Buba, NALC Assistant to the Bishop for Missions, just back from China, presented the NALC’s bold plan to start 1517 house churches by the year 2017. Pastor Buba cited numerous New Testament Scriptures related to how house churches exemplify apostolic ministry that combine Word, Sacrament, preaching, teaching, and service with evangelism.

To achieve this goal, 2,000 people (approximately five from every congregation) will be trained as evangelists. Each house church will be connected to a “mother church.” The goal of every house church is *not* to “build” but to provide a nurturing place where people can “feast on Jesus” and bring new brothers and sisters into fellowship with Him. Ultimately the goal is to multiply.

The steps in developing a house church and video of the mission festival presentations are available on the NALC website — www.thenalc.org.

Worship

Four very different but equally inspiring worship experiences were spaced throughout the festival.



Pastor Didi Panzo, an NALC missionary in Ecuador, poses with one of the dresses made by members of Black Forest Lutheran Church, an NALC congregation in Colorado Springs, Colo., for women in Ecuador.

Preaching from four different texts, Pastor Eric Waters, Pastor Trina Petersen, Pastor Challa Baro and Pastor David Keener called upon us to look up and reach out by the Holy Spirit’s power to offer the world the Good News of Jesus Christ. Throughout Scripture God uses people who don’t feel equipped or ready. The challenge is for us to be alert to His call. When we receive the call, we need to pray, confess, repent, ask, and knock with the support of

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a caring community. Then we need to go and let Christ through the Holy Spirit work through us. As Pastor Keener said in the closing sermon, "Church is the place where you learn things that are so important to you, your family, and the lives of others for eternity. ... Don't just come to church; come to Christ and become the Church."

Take-Away Impressions

How do we become disciple-making disciples? In summary, here are some ideas and practices that spoke to me and to other attendees that I pray will help you.

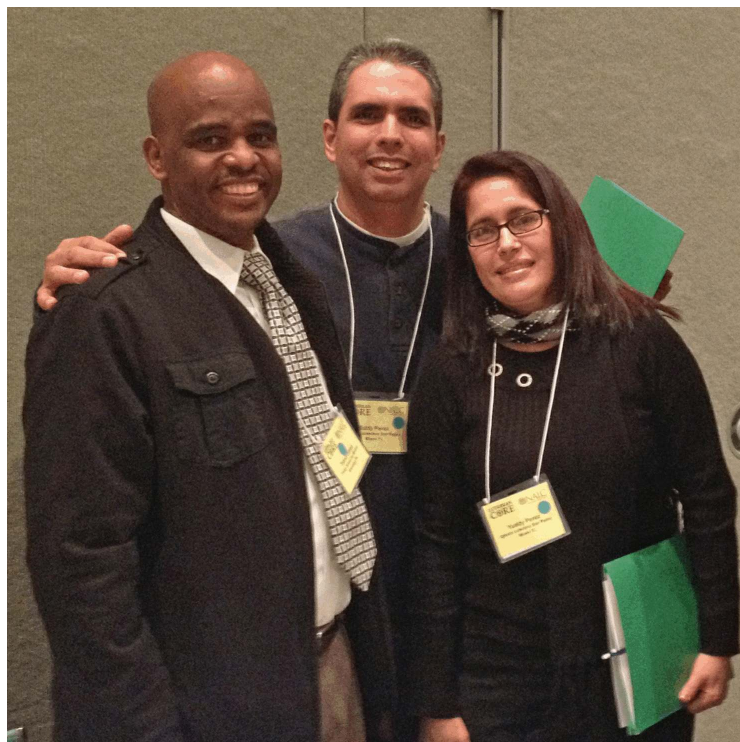
+ Discipleship is a process of spiritual growing that lasts a lifetime. It must be undertaken with prayer and intentionality, and must include a system of accountability.

+ In order to disciple someone, we must be disciplined ourselves through an accountable relationship.

+ The Holy Bible (especially the Gospel of Luke and the Book of Acts) is our handbook for discipleship.

+ Reading and praying the Scriptures daily helps us be alert to the Holy Spirit and the needs of others.

+ Regular confession and repentance is essential to remaining humble, willing servants.



Tsena Dinssa of Trinity School for Ministry in Ambridge, Pa., poses with Pastor Eddy and Yuddy Perez of Iglesia Luterana San Pedro, an NALC congregation in Miami, Fla.

+ We must be alert and receptive to the Holy Spirit; we must be obedient and step out in faith when we are called. Through faithful action, courage and power will come.

+ Disciples are made in nurturing communities of faith. We need to connect people to them.

+ Small groups are important. Hearing other people's faith stories motivates and emboldens us to be willing witnesses to others.

+ We must blend elements of discipleship throughout all the ministries of the church. It must become a ministry lifestyle.

+ Each of us needs to disciple someone.

The 2014 Mission Festival will be Nov. 6-8 at Upper Arlington Lutheran Church in Hilliard, Ohio.

Lynn Kickingbird, a member of Peace Lutheran Church, an NALC congregation in Edmond, Okla., chairs the Lutheran CORE Steering Committee.



Bill Mowry of The Navigators led one of the workshops offered to those attending the Mission Festival.

Speakers are announced for 2014 Theological Conference

Rightly Handling the Word of Truth: Scripture, Canon and Creed

“Rightly Handling the Word of Truth: Scripture, Canon and Creed” is the theme of the 2014 Theological Conference July 22-23 at The Citadel in Charleston, S.C.

The annual theological conference is sponsored by the North American Lutheran Church and Lutheran CORE and is held between their Convocations. Lutheran CORE’s Convocation is July 21-22, and the NALC Convocation is July 24-25. All events will take place at The Citadel.

Speakers for the Theological Conference include:

+ Dr. Robert Benne, Jordan Trexler Professor Emeritus and Research Associate at Roanoke College in Salem, Va.

+ The Rev. Dr. Mark Granquist, Associate Professor of Church History at Luther Seminary in St. Paul, Minn.

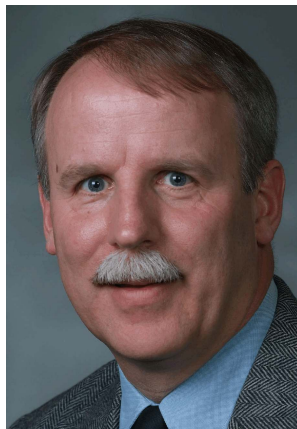
+ The Rev. Dr. Stephen Hultgren, Lecturer in New Testament at Australian Lutheran College in Adelaide, Australia.

+ Dr. R. David Nelson, a Lutheran theologian, who serves Baker Publishing Group as Acquisitions Editor for Baker Academic and Brazos Press. He earned an M.Div. at Beeson Divinity School, Samford University, and a Ph.D. at King’s College, University of Aberdeen in Scotland.

+ The Rev. Dr. Christopher Seitz, Senior Research Professor, Wycliffe College, Toronto School of Theology in the University of Toronto.



Robert Benne



Mark Granquist



Stephen Hultgren



R. David Nelson



Amy Schiffrin



Christopher Seitz

+ The Rev. Dr. Amy Schiffrin, Director of the North American Lutheran Seminary and its Seminary Center at Trinity School for Ministry in Ambridge, Pa.

+ Dr. David Yeago, Professor of Systematic Theology for the North American Lutheran Seminary House of Studies in the Department of Lutheran Studies at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary in Charlotte, N.C.

Watch the NALC News and the NALC website for more information about the Convocations and theological conference.

Lutheran, Anglican representatives continue ecumenical consultation

Representatives of the Anglican Church in North America (ACNA) and the North American Lutheran Church continued their ecumenical relationship with a consultation Nov. 18-19 hosted by Trinity School for Ministry in Ambridge, Pa.

Participants included Bishop Ray Sutton (ACNA) and Pastor David Wendel (NALC), ecumenical officers of their respective bodies; along with Bishop Win Mott, Anglican co-chair of the consultation, Bishop Emeritus Paull Spring, Pastor Mark Chavez and Rev. Eric Riesen (NALC representatives) and the Rev. Canon Daryl Fenton, the Rev. Art Going, the Rev. Travis Boline, the Rev. Canon Jack Luminog, the Rev. Gerald McDermott, and the Rev. Jonathan Riches (ACNA representatives).

After sharing updates regarding the ministries of each church body, conversations focused on various doctrinal topics and further work that is needed on each topic.

Discussion followed regarding cooperation in local mission and service, shared involvement in church planting, theological education, and the need for increased communication and cooperation at the local level.

Both church bodies will encourage their members to develop relationships with existing congregations of the other church body when appropriate. It was



Members of the consultation between the Anglican Church in North America and the North American Lutheran Church.

noted that members of each church body may currently receive the Lord's Supper within congregations of the other church body, as each practices Eucharistic hospitality for all who are baptized and believe in the real presence of Christ in the sacrament. A common document expressing this current reality as pastoral guidance for members is being prepared for future release.

The consultation was introduced to the Rev. Dr. Amy Schiffrin, newly called director of the North American Lutheran Seminary, a partnership with Trinity (Anglican) School for Ministry.

The next ACNA-NALC Ecumenical Consultation will take place in May in Columbus, Ohio. The topic for study and conversation will be the doctrine of justification, focusing on a paper prepared jointly by the Rev. Dr. Gerald McDermott and Bishop Emeritus Paull Spring.

NALC, Lutheran CORE meet with International Christian Network

Bishop Emeritus Paull Spring of the North American Lutheran Church and Pastor Paul Borg of Lutheran CORE participated in a two-day consultation with representatives from the International Christian Network. The consultation took place Oct. 30-31 in Neuendettelsau, Germany.

The purpose of the consultation was to learn more about the International Christian Network and to explore whether the North American Lutheran Church and Lutheran CORE should become members of the Network.

“The situation in Europe is at least as dire for the faith as it is in North America,” said Bishop Spring. “Secularization now permeates most of European society, and the churches of Europe are moving rapidly away from their Biblical and Confessional roots.”

The International Christian Network is a fellowship of several reform movements within the German and Scandinavian churches. The network is formally structured with officers, a board of directors, a constitution, and an annual meeting. It sponsors theological conferences and seminars and publishes a quarterly journal.

The network seeks to serve as a vehicle for many separate reform movements — all of whom are committed to the authority of the Bible and the ecumenical creeds.

At its January meeting, the Executive Council of the North American Lutheran Church will be asked to approve associate membership in the International Christian Network for a period of three years. At the



Participants in the International Christian Network Consultation, from left, Andreus Späth, Pastor Dietrich Blaufuss, Pastor Paul Borg, Bishop Paull Spring, Pastor Wolfhart Schlinchting, and Bishop Heinrich Herrmanns. Not pictured is Pastor Martin Fromm.

same meeting, the Executive Council will be asked to join in planning a June 2015 conference in Germany on the theme, “From Membership to Discipleship.”

“Up to now the network appears to have emphasized academic and theological concerns. My hope is that we in the NALC can provide the network more in the way of practical help for pastoral and congregational renewal,” Bishop Spring said.

“We were treated warmly and graciously by our German hosts,” Pastor Borg said. “It was especially encouraging to witness the Germans’ serious concern for how can we journey together in moving from ‘membership’ to first century discipleship in the 21st century.”

Both Bishop Spring and Pastor Borg were appointed to a planning group for the June 2015 seminar.

Twice Adopted in Texas

Sunday, Dec. 1, St. John Lutheran Church in Boerne, Texas, celebrated the baptism of a brother and sister. It a double celebration. They celebrated the adoption of Katiana and Jamesson Cook into the family of God and the long journey that led to their adoption into the Cook family.

The story starts the week after the earthquake that devastated the nation of Haiti in January of 2010. The Cook family was approached to serve as an immediate relief adoptive family via Humanitarian Parol for two Haitian children from the HCRM Orphanage of Peitionville, Haiti.

Within the next three months, Lisa and David Cook and their daughter, Makayla, visited Haiti with teams of parents and families seeking to offer aid, as well as meet their adoptive children.



Upon her father's return from Haiti in the spring of 2010, MaKayla sought the aid of St. John to begin raising money to support repairs to the orphanage, as well as nutritional aid for the children. Within one month they had raised over \$10,000 and were able to deliver it to the director of the orphanage, Pastor Jean Fritz, and see it put to immediate use in repairing their broken and contaminated well system, as well as in providing the children with fresh supplies of food and water.

Sadly, Humanitarian Parol closed before the family was able to get Katiana and Jamesson out of Haiti.



So began an almost three year process of adoption.

Through it all, they maintained faith that their family would be together someday, but the wait was very hard to bear at times. Over the long wait, St. John was able to sponsor a team to return to begin construction on the new, and safer, orphanage site in December of 2010. They were able not only to begin construction on the site, but also to spend valued time with the children of the HCRM orphanage over fourteen days.

After years of prayer, hope and waiting, the Cook family was finally able to bring their children home in September of 2012.



The Cook family, from left, JoAnn (grandmother). Katiana, Lisa, Makayla, David, Jordan and Jamesson.

California Mission Festival a success

Eighty-seven people from 12 congregations attended a NALC Mission Festival co-sponsored by the Central Pacific Mission District and Southwest Pacific Mission District and hosted by Saint John's Lutheran Church in Arroyo Grande, Calif., on Saturday, Oct. 26.

The Rev. Dr. Gemechis Buba, NALC Assistant to the Bishop for Missions, was the keynote speaker.

Also present were a number of mission groups in California — plus global mission organizations — that are ready to partner with congregations and individuals: Iglesia Luterana Santa Cruz (Santa Maria); Pueblo de Dios (Compton); Vietnamese Lutheran Church (Huntington Beach); Prince of Peace Lutheran Mission (Santa Barbara); China Service Ventures; and World Mission Prayer League.

Dr. Buba shared his experiences from his recent trip to China as well as other global mission growth. He followed by describing the NALC's new vision for establishing house churches in our local communities. Dr. Buba also preached at Saint John's Reformation celebration service on Sunday.

During the Saturday mission festival, time was set aside for a dual Mission District vote that approved



Those attending the California Mission Festival had the opportunity to visit information booths highlighting a variety of missions.

a resolution asking NALC leadership to establish the next House of Studies on the west coast.

On Monday, Oct. 28, Dr. Buba preached at the campus-wide chapel service of Westmont College in Montecito, Calif. He challenged the over one thousand students attending to “be a star, a light, for Christ in the world.” Both students and staff received his message with enthusiasm.

Lenten preaching symposium in N.C.

The Rev. Dr. Amy Schiffrin, Director of the North American Lutheran Seminary, will present an in-depth look at the Scripture readings assigned for the Sundays in Lent as part of a symposium at the NALS House of Studies at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary in Charlotte, N.C. Friday, Jan. 17. The event is sponsored by the Michael C.D. McDaniel Center for Theology.

“Our theological exploration of each text will not simply be for the purposes of information-gathering, for within this prayerful exegesis our lives will be submitted to God through His written text so that when we are called to voice this text in the assembly, it will be God who is reading us. As we pray the assigned texts and as we begin to proclaim

them, what is mediated to us and through us is the truth, i.e., the truth about God, the truth about humankind, the truth about the word, and the truth about the world to come. Such truth gives direction and purpose to our preaching so that those who hear will be led in faith into the future that God is preparing for them. It is the Holy Spirit who is present in every page of Scripture, and, as preachers of his Word, God will use us to announce his reign among us,” the symposium brochure explains.

Cost for the workshop is \$25 with an additional \$10 for lunch. More information is available at www.thenalc.org.

Bishop's Christmas Message

Dear Disciples of Christ Jesus,

Last year I encouraged you to reflect on the shepherds as you contemplated the birth of Jesus. This year I have been reflecting on a silent partner in the Christmas event: Joseph.

He is often relegated to a part of the background, the scenery. He doesn't have a line in the Christmas narrative. In fact, there are no words of Joseph recorded in Scripture.

So many people in our culture and the Church seem to be silent and passive observers, longing to get through life by blending into the background. They often wonder: "Is there any role for me to play in God's redemptive plan of salvation through Christ Jesus?"

The answer is a profound, "Yes" — for Joseph and for all those wondering about their part in the proclamation of the Gospel. As you look at the Gospel accounts leading up to and following the birth of Jesus, God's plan includes Joseph from the beginning. Joseph is a faithful husband and a caring father. He is a man of faith who listens to God's messages and then obeys God's commands, trusting in God's promises.

During this season of the year, the sounds can overwhelm a silent witness. Christmas invites us to hear the sounds of a busy inn, the animals feeding in the stable, angels singing, excited shepherds talking and walking quickly to Bethlehem, and perhaps the voice of Mary singing a soft lullaby to Jesus.

In our own celebration of Christmas, we can be overwhelmed by the sounds of Christmas music that we have heard for weeks, choir concerts, television specials, and parties. Through all the noise it can be difficult to hear the proclamation of a profound love calling us to respond obediently. Through all the sounds of this season, Joseph reminds us of how important it is to listen and obey.



From the Bishop

Bishop John Bradosky

On the First Sunday of Christmas the Gospel text (Matthew 2:13-23) invites us to listen to a very different set of sounds. As Joseph listens, he hears the voice of alarming concern from an angel. There are military-like instructions, commands. We hear the voice of Herod's evil rage that turns into a bloodbath of children. We hear the voices of crying children as they are separated from their mothers and brutally murdered. We hear the voices of mothers weeping, refusing to be consoled.

Where do we hear the voices of children in tears and the lament of parents? Perhaps it is the place setting for Christmas dinner that remains empty as a son or a daughter has died. Children whose lives were taken in a terrorist's bomb blast, children sold into sexual slavery, addicted to drugs, suffering from malnutrition, poverty, disease and other forms of exploitation. What a contrast these sounds are to the sounds of Christmas, but these are the sounds of the world around us.

The very thing I love about the Scriptures, I also hate. They are wonderfully true and painfully honest! So quickly it moves from the celebration of Jesus' birth to the stark reality of the world into which He was born — a world filled with suffering and pain, with grief, terrorism and despair, the abuse of power, and the victimization of the innocent. Keeping these two passages so close in our lectionary readings for worship reminds me that Jesus came for a purpose! Jesus came to be with us in that suffering. Jesus came, not to remove our suffering, but to bear it with us!

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Eli Weisel, a Jewish author who wrote the book, *Night*, was a slave laborer in a World War II German concentration camp. He writes about the Holocaust and the things that happened to him during the war. One evening he returned after a day of work to discover that three gallows had been erected in the center of the camp. Three prisoners were going to be executed, and the guards had orders to force all the other prisoners to stand and watch the executions. Two of the victims were men, but to their horror they saw that the third was only a small boy. Nooses were put around their necks, and all three were made to stand on chairs. Then the chairs were kicked out from underneath them. The two men died instantly as the weight of their bodies broke their necks. But the little boy was so light that his neck did not break. And there he hung gasping for a breath, dangling at the end of the rope. And the prisoners were forced to stand there and watch him for more than 30 minutes, until finally, he died. In this horrifying moment, one of the men behind Weisel cried out, "You say that there is a God? Then where is He? Where is He now?" Weisel writes, "I turned back and looked at him and said, There He is. He is hanging at the end of a rope."

Jesus entered a world in which there is uncertainty and death, and He came to offer the certainty of His love and overcame death in His glorious resurrection. It isn't much past Christmas before we see God hanging, not from the end of a rope, but on a cross!

It is impossible for Kristi and me to get through a Christmas without some measure of grief. There on the mantle in our home is a picture of our son Joshua — the last school picture taken before he died. There are the ornaments he created that still make it to the tree, year after year. There is the hymn, "Away in a Manger," that was also sung at his funeral.

*Be near me, Lord Jesus; I ask you to stay,
Close by me forever and love me, I pray.
Bless all the dear children in your tender care
And fit us for heaven to live with you there.*

While there is always pain and revisiting our grief, we also know that Jesus is here to face it with us. Because of Jesus' resurrection, we also know that Joshua is with Him forever as well. It is the cross



St. Joseph and the infant Jesus by Guido Reni

and the empty tomb that proclaim the real joy and meaning of Christmas.

In the midst of such painful moments, I have learned to appreciate the example of Joseph. Joseph listened for God's Word. He listened to the angel's voice. He trusted in God's wisdom that these messengers passed on to him. Think of what God told him to do:

- + Take Mary to be your wife even though she is pregnant.
- + Get up and go; you are in danger.
- + Become a refugee in a foreign land, Egypt.
- + Stay there without family or friends until Herod dies.
- + Go to Nazareth the long way and raise Jesus there.

Joseph never complains, he just trusts and believes the Word of God.

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Ignoring God's Word always puts us in great danger and on a pathway that leads to destruction.

Joseph's example calls us to faith. Being obedient to Jesus is the life of trust and faith. This is the very nature and meaning of discipleship, not a new law but the loving response of obedience, true faith! The example of his life also reminds us to listen to what is happening around us. Hear the evil, the cries of those in need, the pain and the grief of those who have been wounded, terrorized and murdered so senselessly!

Joseph not only listened carefully but acted on God's instructions. Joseph did exactly what God asked him to do. He didn't wait until morning. He didn't wait for better weather. He took immediate action.

Jesus said, "Blessed are those who hear the word of God and obey it." In another place He said, "Now that you know these things, you will be blessed if you do them." Through Joseph, God provided protection and care. It was obedience motivated out of faith and love of God that moved him to action.

God is still speaking through His Word. God is still giving us ears to hear the cries of people in need in our community, city, state, nation and world. He is still expecting our faithful response through obedient action.

Joseph was more important than we can imagine to this Christmas story, and his example should inspire and guide us even now!

As I was finishing my letter to you, I stumbled across this poem by Howard Thurman called: "The Work of Christmas."

*When the song of the angels is stilled,
When the star in the sky is gone,
When the kings and princes are home,
When the shepherds are back with their flocks,
The work of Christmas begins:
To find the lost,
To heal the broken,
To feed the hungry,
To release the prisoner,
To rebuild the nations,
To bring peace among brothers and sisters
To make music in the heart.*

Even if you think you have little to say and remain relatively silent, it is not necessary to remain passive. Listen closely and obey immediately — great advice from Joseph for all of us who are a part of the Body of Christ, His presence in this world!

May your Christmas journey provide time for active listening and faith-filled obedience and may the reality of His presence bring you hope, joy and peace.

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IMPACT
National Youth Event
June 26-29, 2014
Cleveland, Ohio

Equipping young people to live out their faith in Jesus Christ.

Youth ENCOUNTER
Partnering with Christian communities to strengthen their youth ministry.

The poster features a large blue background with the word "IMPACT" in large, white, distressed font. Below it, the text "National Youth Event" is in a bold, sans-serif font. The dates "June 26-29, 2014" and location "Cleveland, Ohio" are listed. A quote in italics reads "Equipping young people to live out their faith in Jesus Christ." The "Youth ENCOUNTER" logo is at the bottom, with the tagline "Partnering with Christian communities to strengthen their youth ministry." Two inset photos show a man playing a guitar and a group of young people with their arms raised in worship.

New Life Lutheran Church

Menomonie, Wisconsin

New Life Lutheran Church in Menomonie, Wis., was established as an NALC mission congregation in February 2011.

The congregation worships in an elementary school cafeteria because it is large enough to accommodate their numbers. Each Sunday they set up chairs and tables, the sound system, and everything needed for Communion and fellowship.

They hold a bi-weekly Bible study in the evening, a men's Bible study in the morning, and a monthly women's Bible study. They are actively looking for a permanent building site either to occupy or to build upon and have held fund-raising events for the building program.

The congregation is actively involved in the local food pantry, often donating food for a growing population of underfed people. They also use the food pantry building for many of their meetings, including Bible study and confirmation.

Their nine confirmation students recently put together six boxes of Christmas presents for the Samaritan's Purse program, and the congregation has identified a needy family in the area on whom they will shower presents so that the children in that family will have a wonderful Christmas.

New Life has advertised themselves to the community by participating in holiday parades and



Youth from New Life Lutheran Church in Menomonie, Wis., pose after packing food for Kids Against Hunger.

local New-Life-kid-meals charity events, printing invitation cards, packaging food for Kids Against Hunger, and selling doughnuts at the Farmer's Market every Saturday in the summer.

People often come to watch their doughnut-making machine and find out why the members are having such a great time making little round cakes with holes in them. It has actually turned into an evangelism tool, as they have become known as the "Doughnut Church."

Comprised of dedicated Christians who warmly welcome anyone who comes to their fellowship and who step up to take responsibility for the operation of their faith fellowship, these are people who remain committed to the faith once delivered to the saints and do so with grace and energy.

Their pastor, the Rev. Dr. Roy A. Harrisville III, says, "As their pastor I am pleased to serve them and appreciate very much their wonderful support and accommodation of my position as Dean of the Wisconsin-Upper Michigan Mission District. They are a delight to serve."



A Preaching Conference for the NALC

From Death to Life: Preaching Law and Gospel in Lent and Easter

There was a time when it seemed all Lutheran pastors were taught and understood the Lutheran distinction between Law and Gospel.

This was a time when all Lutheran seminaries focused on this distinction and taught that it was the foundation to understanding Holy Scripture.

Therefore, most every Lutheran pastor approached the preaching task from the perspective of properly distinguishing Law and Gospel in the appointed texts.

In this time, lives were transformed and congregations enlivened by the preaching of Law and Gospel in Lutheran pulpits.

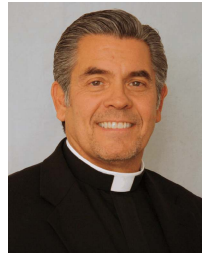
Many argue that time has passed, as many Lutheran pastors in North America no longer understand the proper distinction between Law and Gospel. Many argue that Lutheran preaching is no longer freeing and transforming because pastors no longer preach Law properly — calling people to repent of sin to be better prepared to receive the Gospel.

In the North American Lutheran Church, however, we are not willing to accept this situation. In the NALC, we are hoping and praying that we can, in some small way, renew the preaching of our pastors through a landmark preaching conference being offered in February.

The NALC Preaching Conference — “From Death to Life; Preaching Law and Gospel in Lent and Easter” — will be held Feb. 18-20 at Westin Hotel Lake Mary Orlando North in Lake Mary, Fla. The conference will begin Tuesday at 6:30 p.m. and will end at noon on Thursday.

The conference will provide practical teaching on Law and Gospel preaching, as well as inspiring Bible study of the upcoming lectionary passages for Lent and Easter.

The great strength of the conference will be the speakers and their topics.



Ministry Matters

Pastor David Wendel

Assistant to the Bishop
for Ministry and Ecumenism

Teaching on the Lutheran understanding of Law and Gospel will be the Rev. Dr. Carl Fickenscher II, a pastor of the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod. He is dean of Pastoral Education and Certification and professor of Pastoral Ministry and Missions at Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne, Ind., teaching primarily in the area of homiletics.

Dr. Fickenscher is editor of *Concordia Pulpit Resources*, the Missouri Synod's preaching journal published by Concordia Publishing House. He has published numerous articles, essays, sermons and curricular pieces, receiving an award from Concordia Historical Institute in 2012 for a series of articles on the preaching of C. F. W. Walther.

Speaking on the challenges and opportunities facing Lutheran preaching today, and how preaching moves people “From Death to Life” will be the Rev. Dr. Amy Schiffrin, Director of the North American Lutheran Seminary, and a member of the faculty of Trinity School for Ministry in Ambridge, Pa.

Dr. Schiffrin is a graduate of Luther Northwestern Theological Seminary (M. Div.) and the Graduate Theological Union (Ph.D.) She is also Adjunct Faculty in Liturgy and Homiletics at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary. She has served as Dean of the Chapel and Adjunct Faculty in Liturgical Studies and Hymnody at Pacific Lutheran Theological Seminary; summer faculty in Liturgics and Lutheran Confessions, Hartwick College; Instructor, Department of Religion, North Dakota State University. She has served in many positions in

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parish, campus, and seminary ministry in U.S. and Canada (1984-2013). Dr. Schiffrin has written many articles and essays and is a popular speaker on liturgy and homiletics.

The Rev. Dr. James Nestigen will lead in-depth Bible studies on the lectionary Scripture texts for Lent and Easter. This will be especially helpful for preachers as we move toward Ash Wednesday.

A graduate of Concordia College, Moorhead, Minn., Dr. Nestigen earned Masters of Divinity and Masters of Theology degrees from Luther Theological Seminary. He received his doctorate in theology from St. Michael's College in the University of Toronto in 1984. Following his ordination in 1971, he served as pastor of Faith Lutheran Church in Coquille, Ore., before becoming curriculum editor at Augsburg Publishing House from 1974-1976. Dr. Nestigen returned to Luther Seminary as Assistant Professor of Church History in 1980. He was named Professor of Church History in 1992 and Professor Emeritus of Church History in 2006.

Dr. Nestigen has written and spoken prolifically on Martin Luther's catechisms and Confessional Lutheran theology.

Dr. Schiffrin and Dr. Nestigen are both NALC pastors and members of the Joint Commission on Theology and Doctrine.

Included in the program are three preaching practicums. Clergy participants are invited to bring an Ash Wednesday, Lent or Easter manuscript sermon. Three sermons will be selected for presentation in each of the three practicums, facilitated by the three faculty. Reflection will take place on the Law and Gospel understanding of each sample sermon.

Another highlight of the conference will be an unstructured discussion with the three professors on any topic related to Lutheran theology, Law and Gospel, preaching, etc.

The conference will conclude with a panel discussion titled, "What Does This Mean: Practical Implications for Lutheran Preaching," aimed at

integrating the learning for parish practice. It is suggested those who are interested might read C. F. W. Walther's *Law and Gospel: How to Read and Apply the Bible*.

The cost of the conference is being defrayed by an anonymous NALC donor to support the renewal of Lutheran preaching. Pastors participating will need to cover the cost of their own transportation and hotel. We have negotiated an excellent hotel rate of \$109 per night, plus tax. For those who wish to come early or remain after the conference, the same rate will apply. Participants will make their own hotel registrations directly.

Registration for the conference is only \$50 per person. Materials have been emailed to all NALC pastors and are posted on the NALC website.

This will be the first gathering specifically aimed at NALC clergy, addressing an important need in our church. All NALC pastors and seminarians are invited and encouraged to attend. Non-NALC pastors who might like to attend are welcome to call the NALC to inquire about space availability

For questions or if you need more information, call the NALC office, 614-777-5709, or e-mail NALC administrative assistant, Becky Seifert, bseifert@thenalc.org.

Advent devotions by Pastor Wendel are now online

Amen. Come, Lord Jesus! is a new Advent daily devotional booklet by Pastor David Wendel, NALC Assistant to the Bishop for Ministry and Ecumenism.

The devotional booklet is available for free online at www.thenalc.org. Use it as a personal, family, or small-group Advent devotional!

For more information contact Pastor Wendel at dwendel@thenalc.org.

NALC members to participate in March for Life in Washington, D.C.

By Pastor Dennis R. Di Mauro

*For you created my inmost being;
you knit me together in my
mother's womb.
I praise you because I am fearfully
and wonderfully made;
your works are wonderful,
I know that full well.
My frame was not hidden from you
when I was made in the secret
place,
when I was woven together in
the depths of the earth.
Your eyes saw my unformed body;
all the days ordained for me
were written in your book
before one of them came to be.
— Psalm 139:13-16 (NIV)*

The words of the psalmist amply demonstrate God's love for all His people and His active participation in the creation of each and every one for us. He has a plan for our lives which was written before we were even born. He loves each of us with an unimaginable love — a love so great that he sent his Son to die for us. Scripture makes it clear that the birth of every child is a joyous event which is celebrated in heaven.

But this joy is not always shared by humans here on earth. Due to the pressures of our sinful world, including teen pregnancy, poverty, substance abuse, and ignorance about child development in the womb, people often choose abortion as the remedy for God's gift of life.

Since the 1973 decision, more than 55 million children have been aborted in the United States — with 1.2 million abortions performed in just the last year. Statistics tell us that over 95 percent of those abortions were performed on children with no suspected fetal abnormalities.



Some of the Lutheran participants in the 2013 March for Life in Washington, D.C. (LCMS photo)

The North American Lutheran Church seeks to stand up to the national tragedy of abortion by supporting women in crisis pregnancies with Christian love and support. This outreach to women in difficult circumstances needs to take place in our communities, our congregations, and through our local pregnancy centers.

We also seek to stand up in Christian witness to our elected representatives who allow our national policy of abortion-on-demand to continue unabated — members of Congress who refuse to restrict abortion even in the third trimester and who give Planned Parenthood of America, the nation's largest abortion provider, over \$500 million in taxpayer subsidies every year.

Last year, Bishop John Bradosky and Pastor David Wendel attended the National Memorial for the

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Preborn and their Mothers and Fathers at D.A.R. Constitution Hall in Washington, D.C., an ecumenical service which prays for the end of abortion and celebrates those who work for alternatives to abortion. They also extended greetings from the NALC to the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod's Life Conference, which was held in nearby Crystal City, Va.

In January, the NALC Executive Council will be holding its meeting in Washington, D.C. so that they and our executive staff can participate in the pro-life events there.

Members of NALC congregations are also invited to participate in the 2014 March for Life, which will be held on Wednesday, Jan. 22, in Washington, D.C. The march will take place on the 41st anniversary of the U.S. Supreme Court's Roe v. Wade decision which made abortion legal in all 50 states.

The day's activities include:

8:30 a.m. - 10:30 a.m. — National Memorial for the Preborn and their Mothers and Fathers at D.A.R. Constitution Hall, 1776 D Street NW, Washington, D.C..

12 noon - 4 p.m. After the service, the NALC marchers will be joining up with other pro-life Lutherans, represented by Lutherans for Life and



LCMS President Matthew Harrison; Pastor David Wendel, NALC Assistant to the Bishop for Ministry and Ecumenism; and NALC Bishop John Bradosky at the 2013 March for Life. (LCMS photo)

the LCMS Life Ministry, at 7th Street and Independence Ave. to participate in the March for Life on the National Mall.

NALC members who plan to participate in the March for Life are asked to notify Pastor Dennis Di Mauro, pastor of Trinity Lutheran Church in Warrenton, Va., and president of Northern Virginia Lutherans for Life, at 703-568-3346 or dennisdimauro@yahoo.com.

For more information about the two events visit marchforlife.org or nationalprayerservice.org.

Two strategies for year-end giving

As we approach the end of year, there are some giving strategies that may provide significant tax benefits to donors.

+ Those who have experienced a rise in the value of a stock or mutual fund may give stock or mutual fund shares directly to their congregation, the NALC, or any non-profit organization. By giving directly, the donor does not need to pay capital gains tax and gains a charitable deduction.

+ Those who are over age 70½ may give directly from their IRA to their congregation, the NALC, or any non-profit organization. These charitable IRA

distributions are free of federal income tax. This is expected to be the last year that this benefit will be available.

The process to take advantage of either of these opportunities is relatively easy. Please consult your financial advisor, pastor, or charity for more information on these giving opportunities.

Please consider a special gift to the NALC Theological Education Fund as a part of your year-end giving. The NALC is in the midst of a major appeal seeking to raise \$1 million for the new North American Lutheran Seminary.

From Relief to Recovery in the Philippines

By Pastor Dan Ruth
Lutheran World Relief

A lot of positive work has been done. There's a long way to go. Over the past week I have tagged along with LWR staff in the Philippines to continue our work helping people recover from Typhoon Haiyan, which hit this island nation just over a month ago.

This week I traveled around three of the islands hit hardest by the typhoon: Leyte, Cebu and Bantayan. I've seen a lot and talked to many people. And one thing is fairly consistently clear: we've moved from the relief phase of the disaster to an early recovery phase.

What's the difference between relief and recovery?

Relief is what is needed in the immediate aftermath of an emergency. People need the basic elements that support life: food, water and (temporary) shelter. As I have hopped from community to community, with a few exceptions, it's pretty clear that people have those basic things.

Recovery, on the other hand, is the slower process of getting people back to and beyond their pre-typhoon lives. It's the concept of "build back better." And while that concept can be fiercely debated in terms of the details, nobody wants to see the same amount of devastation when the next storm hits.

What does recovery look like?

It depends on the need. The needs here are much different than the needs were after the 2010 Haiti Earthquake, for example. And as we've talked to different communities, we've seen that the needs vary from community to community.

In some areas, we're working with Habitat for Humanity to distribute shelter repair kits. These kits contain building materials that help people repair or rebuild their homes, using better techniques to prepare for the next storm. Delia Moreno has already completed her home. When we saw her two days ago, she had just spent her first night in



A neighbor family of Delia Moreno shows off the new shelter they have build with Shelter Repair Kits. (LWR photo)

the home and was overjoyed to not need to sleep under a table anymore.

In other areas, people's main issue is that they've lost their means of making an income. There we are doing one of two things. In some places, we are providing cash to people who help with debris removal (cash for work). This not only helps clear land that could be used for housing or agriculture, but gives people a shot of extra income. And in other areas where the debris has already largely been cleared, we are doing simple cash transfers so that people can buy the things they need to recover.

These programs are just the beginning in the long line of recovery. Soon LWR Quilts & Kits will arrive here in the Philippines, bringing additional comfort and joy to recovering families.

Thanks to you, there is lasting hope during this Advent season. We wait actively for Christ's birth and work fervently to be signs of that hope to others.

For more information on LWR's work or to give online go to www.lwr.org. Gifts may be sent by mail to:

Lutheran World Relief
P.O. Box 17061
Baltimore, MD 21297-1061.

A Typhoon's Silver Lining: Safe Water For Generations

Millions in the Philippines are homeless ... thousands are dead ... devastation is indescribable. Can we dare to hope for a silver lining in Typhoon Haiyan? Modern history — and the engineers of Water Missions International — say “Yes! Today’s suffering can motivate tomorrow’s solutions.”

Consider the impact of other monster storms: In the wake of the giant tsunami in 2004, Indonesia has implemented a new disaster-management strategy that could save countless lives in the future. Hurricane Katrina, which ravaged New Orleans in 2005, sparked a spirit of reform and poverty relief in the Big Easy. The list goes on.

So, what is the silver lining in Typhoon Haiyan? Life-saving, long-term safe water solutions.

Months before the most powerful storm on record slammed into the Philippines, experts worldwide warned of impending doom in the Philippines that could kill millions.

The “Asian Water Development Outlook 2013 Report” — released on World Water Day, March 22, 2013 — sounded the alarm for an “imminent water crisis” in the region if immediate steps were not taken to improve water quality and management.

“When Typhoon Haiyan ripped through the Philippines, we already had engineers on the ground in the region working to design and implement strategic, long-term, safe water solutions,” said chemical engineer George Greene III, co-founder and CEO of Water Missions International, a nonprofit Christian relief and development engineering organization providing sustainable safe water and sanitation solutions for people in developing countries and natural disasters.

“Of course, our immediate focus shifted to helping the Super Typhoon Haiyan victims simply survive,” said Greene, whose organization has responded to every major natural disaster since 2001.

Water Missions International has activated emergency water supply efforts helping victims in the hardest hit areas. By Thanksgiving, the organization had mobilized additional equipment and staff to serve 63 Philippine communities and a total of 315,000 people with their daily drinking water needs now — and for up to 20 years after installation — with training of local residents by Water Missions staff and engineers.

This kind of immediate and sustainable solutions is what corporate sponsors like Fed Ex, and partners like Franklin Graham’s Samaritan’s Purse and The Pentair Foundation say motivate them to work alongside Water Missions International.

Water Missions is hoping that today’s outreach to meet the immediate needs of the Philippines will stimulate increased awareness of and support for efforts to head off an even worse, yet preventable disaster.

“Water-borne diseases threaten to claim far more lives in the Philippines than Typhoon Haiyan. If we heed the warnings now and act, we can give them safe drinking water and sanitation for generations to come,” said Greene, who looks forward to the day when we can look back on Typhoon Haiyan and say, “Out of that wall of water that killed thousands came safe water that is saving millions.”

Water Missions International, led and staffed by top engineers from across the U.S., is currently seeking support for immediate and long-term safe water solutions in the Philippines.

To learn more and donate to Water Missions International’s work, please visit www.watermissions.org. Gifts may also be sent to:

Water Missions International
P.O. Box 31258
Charleston, SC 29417

Small-Groups Ministry Revisited

Jeremy Treat concluded a recent *Christianity Today* article, “The Glory of the Cross,” with these words:

“We can take comfort that God has entered into our suffering, embrace His power in the midst of our suffering, and cling to Him with hope that one day He will put an end to our suffering. We are being transformed from one degree of glory to another — by way of the cross.”

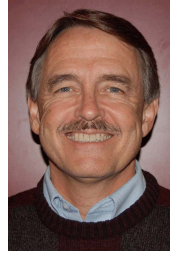
I’ve been reflecting on the subject of suffering a great deal as of late. It’s been a very difficult few months in the life of my congregation. We’ve had five deaths in the last few months — three of them occurring less than 11 weeks after a medical diagnosis. But there is one aspect of our congregation’s ministry — in addition to one-on-one pastoral care — which has made a real difference. I am referring to our small groups.

In congregations of less than around 75 members, small groups are perhaps not as important. However, in mid-sized and larger congregations, I find them to be crucial in providing for the level of care and support needed by families and individuals in crisis. A small group of six to 12 fellow believers can make a huge difference.

For example, in Adam’s case, his men’s group was there to walk alongside him as he faced the end of his life. This included weekly gatherings at his home once he started hospice care and helping Adam’s wife with projects around the house.

Or there is the case of Sherman, who is still with us but struggling with ALS (Lou Gehrig’s Disease). Sherm’s men’s group has moved their meeting site from church to his home because he can no longer get out of the house.

Then there is the case of the small groups I personally belong to. (That’s right, I belong to two.) They have stepped up to provide me with emotional support since my three-year-old granddaughter Mya’s cancer recently returned. I realize that pastors — when facing a personal crisis — typically receive special attention from the entire congregation. However, the kind of care and



In Pursuit of the Great Commission

Pastor Don Brandt

support exhibited by my small groups is nevertheless on a different level from what I can expect from the congregation as a whole.

Most of us are far too self-absorbed. By being part of a small group we are more likely to look beyond our own needs and begin to live incarnationally. We do this by accompanying fellow group members through both the minor and major struggles of their lives.

If you are part of a congregation of more than 75 active adult members, I encourage you to consider a small-groups ministry. This is especially crucial for any congregation that is too large for its members to all know each other on a first-name basis.

It’s not just about study — although groups of six to 12 are ideal for discussion-oriented study of God’s Word. And it’s not just about fellowship — though it’s hard to beat the kind of friendships that form in a small group of brothers and sisters in Christ.

Perhaps, most importantly, it’s about not having to face the most difficult and challenging moments of our lives alone. It’s about experiencing the love of God through the care and compassion of fellow believers.

If you would like a copy of my previous column on the steps involved in establishing a congregation-wide small-groups ministry, email me. I will send it to you.

Finally, please keep my granddaughter Mya in your prayers as she begins a second, more intensive round of chemotherapy. I’d also appreciate prayers for Mya’s parents: my son, Jason, and daughter-in-law, Natalie.