

# NALC News

North American Lutheran Church

May 2013

## 13 people are nominated for Executive Council

Thirteen people have been nominated to fill two positions on the Executive Council of the North American Lutheran Church.

One pastor and one lay person will be elected to four-year terms on the Executive Council at the NALC's Convocation Aug. 8-9 in Pittsburgh, Pa.

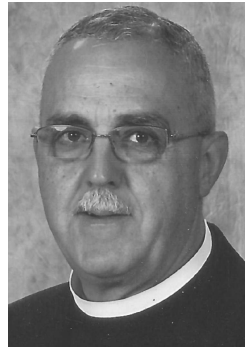
The Executive Council functions as the board of directors for the NALC, providing leadership for the church body between the annual Convocations.

Four people were nominated for the lay position:

- + Matthew Burkhart - Columbus, Ohio
- + Richard Jansak - Hendersonville, N.C.
- + Paul O'Malley - Auburn, Ind.
- + Frank Polkowski - East Amherst, N.Y.

Nine pastors were nominated for the clergy position:

- + Pastor Bassam Abdallah - Hammond, Ind.
- + Pastor Cathi Braasch - Elwood, Neb.
- + Pastor Phillip Gagnon - St. Albert, Alberta
- + Pastor John Hopper - Hot Springs, S.D.
- + Pastor Eddy Perez - Miami, Fla.
- + Pastor Royan Rodney - Middleburgh, N.Y.
- + Pastor Amy Schifrin - Elkader, Iowa
- + Pastor Donna Smith - Champaign, Ill.
- + Pastor Solveig Zamzow - Grafton, Iowa



*Bassam Abdallah*



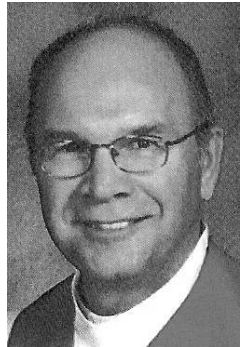
*Cathi Braasch*



*Matthew Burkhart*



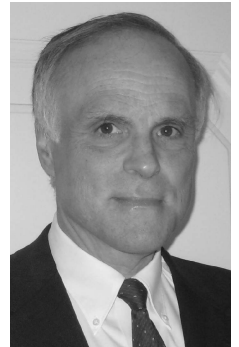
*Phillip Gagnon*



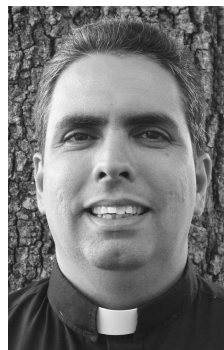
*John Hopper*



*Richard Jansak*



*Paul O'Malley*



*Eddy Perez*



*Frank Polkowski*



*Royan Rodney*



*Amy Schifrin*



*Donna Smith*



*Solveig Zamzow*

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Jon Evans of Pittsburgh, Pa., and Pastor Jeffray Greene of Rantoul, Ill., have been nominated for re-election to the NALC Court of Adjudication.

The Court of Adjudication hears appeals from disciplinary decisions; resolves questions of interpretation of NALC governing documents; and decides claims that a person or entity has violated these governing documents.

Congregations and NALC members were asked to submit nominations for the positions.

The Nominating Committee asked each nominee to complete a biographical information form and to provide a photo. Biographical information provided by the nominees is printed on Pages 23-47.

In addition to the elections, the Convocation will hear reports from NALC leaders and consider a budget for 2014. Convocation delegates will also consider a proposal for the theological education of future NALC pastors.

One of the highlights of the Convocation will be the recognition of Pastor Herb Hafermann for 50 years of mission work in Tanzania. Representatives of the the 6-million-member Evangelical Lutheran Church in Tanzania are scheduled to be present to join in the celebration of Pastor Hafermann's work.

Voting delegates for the NALC Convocation include lay people elected by their congregations and all NALC pastors. Each congregation is entitled to at least one lay delegate. Those who are not delegates for the Convocation are welcome to attend as visitors.

The NALC Convocation is one of four events that will take place Aug. 6-9 at the Sheraton Station Square Hotel in Pittsburgh. The NALC Convocation will be preceded by Lutheran CORE's Convocation on Aug. 6 and by the annual Theological Conference sponsored by Lutheran CORE and the NALC on Aug. 6-7. The Women of the NALC will meet on



***Jon Evans***



***Jeffray Greene***

Aug. 7. (More information on the Women of the NALC meeting is available on Page 17.)

You may register online for all three events at [www.thenalc.org](http://www.thenalc.org). Online registration is the preferred method of registration. Registration fee for the NALC Convocation is \$95. The Theological Conference registration fee is \$115, and the Lutheran CORE Convocation fee is \$70.

The registration fee for each event includes lunch during that event. The NALC Convocation fee also includes dinner on Thursday, Aug. 8. Lunch on Friday, Aug. 9, is not included.

Special rates for hotel rooms are available for those attending the Convocations and Theological Conference. Details are posted on the NALC website.

"On Being the Church in These Precarious Times" is the theme of the annual Theological Conference sponsored by the North American Lutheran Church and Lutheran CORE. Speakers for the theological conference include:

+ The Rev. Dr. Carl E. Braaten, professor emeritus of systematic theology at Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago and former executive director of the Center for Catholic and Evangelical Theology.

+ The Rev. Dr. James A. Nestingen, professor emeritus of church history at Luther Seminary in St. Paul, Minn.

+ The Rev. Dr. Frank Senn, liturgical scholar and pastor of Immanuel Lutheran Church in Evanston, Ill., and Senior of the Society of the Holy Trinity.

+ The Rev. Dr. Stephan Turnbull, senior pastor of First Lutheran Church in White Bear Lake, Minn.

+ The Rev. Dr. Sarah Hinlicky Wilson, assistant research professor at the Institute for Ecumenical Research in Strasbourg, France, and editor of the theological journal, *Lutheran Forum*.

+ Dr. David Yeago, professor of systematic theology in the Department of Lutheran Studies at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary in Charlotte, N.C.

+ The Rev. Dr. Nathan Howard Yoder, pastor of St. Martin's Lutheran Church, Maiden, N.C.

# Gagnon named dean for NALC in Canada

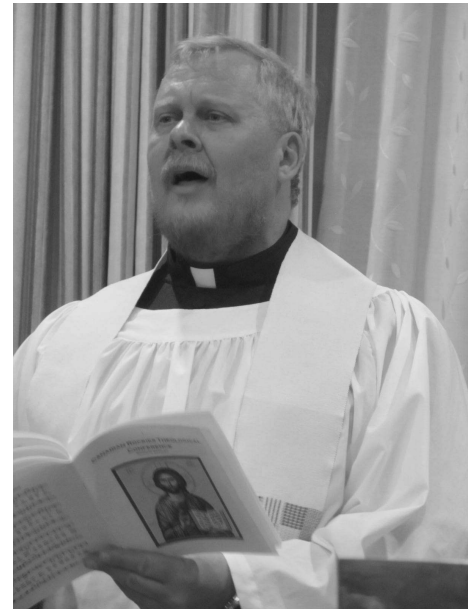
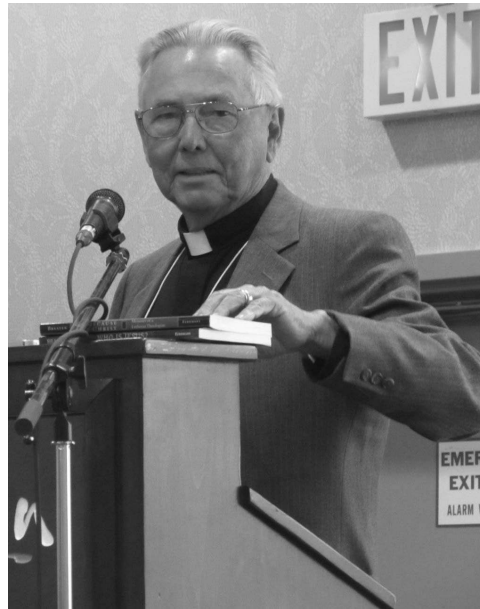
Pastor Phillip Gagnon of St. Albert, Alberta, has been named provisional dean for the Canada Section of the North American Lutheran Church. NALC Bishop John Bradosky announced the appointment April 10 at the Canadian Rockies Theological Conference in Canmore, Alberta.

Pastor Gagnon will serve as provisional dean until the NALC congregations in Canada organize their mission districts and elect deans. There are currently 19 NALC congregations in Canada.

Pastor Gagnon has served St. Albert Evangelical Lutheran Church in St. Albert since 2002. He is also a member of the task force that is working through international legal issues to organize the NALC in Canada. He is a graduate of The King's College in Edmonton, Alberta, and Lutheran Theological Seminary in Saskatoon, Saskatchewan.



*Pastor Phillip Gagnon responds to his appointment as provisional dean for the Canada Section of the NALC. Bishop John Bradosky looks on.*



## *Canadian Rockies Theological Conference*

*The Canadian Rockies Theological Conference was held April 8-11 in Canmore, Alberta. The conference featured lectures from Dr. Carl Braaten (center) and Dr. Robert Jenson and a presentation by Pastor Greg Musselman, vice president of Voice of the Martyrs (left). Pastor Karl Johnsen (right) led worship throughout the conference. The NALC is one of the sponsors of the annual conference. Next year's conference is May 5-8 and will feature Dr. Uwe Siemon-Netto on the Two Kingdoms and The Lutheran Doctrine of Vocation.*



# Pentecost: The Gift of the Holy Spirit

Dear friends,

As we prepare to celebrate Pentecost, I am reminded of an editorial I read of a community expressing great concern about the flu season and how congregations should best respond.

Often the warnings included encouraging people to stay away from public gatherings like worship for fear of catching the virus. Some pastors responded by changing the way people received Communion, avoiding passing the peace, shaking hands, and even encouraging people who didn't feel well to stay at home.

When interviewed by a local paper, a pastor could not avoid an editorial comment. He said, "It is true that the local congregation in an area affected by Bird Flu can be a dangerous place. Unfortunately, in most communities people don't have to worry about catching anything at church because there is nothing that is being spread!"

In the Pentecost text we read of the Church that from its inception is highly contagious and in fact, very dangerous.

It is a Church that is so contagious that it affects the community around it — transforming it with the power of the Holy Spirit at work in the proclamation of the Gospel. We read of a group of people who are so passionate in their love for Jesus, so bold in their proclamation that their words and deeds are perceived as a threat by some. Others will never be the same as their lives are transformed in miraculous ways through faith in Jesus Christ.

The narrative of Pentecost describes the wind and brings to mind the Spirit of God that brings life — the *"ruach"* of creation — God's breath.

Those gathered at Pentecost experienced a fire that did not consume — not unlike Moses' experience with the burning bush. It was a flame that purified, refined and ignited them for mission.

The crowds heard many languages — many tongues — all proclaiming the truth of Jesus. But it was more than an amazing experience. The words



*From the Bishop*

**Bishop John Bradosky**

they spoke were Truth — the Good News of Jesus Christ. They proclaimed them through the power of the Holy Spirit in a way that made sense and compelled many to believe.

What began as a celebration of the harvest of crops became a celebration of the harvest of souls. Jesus said, "The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few" (Luke 10:2). Those disciples gathered together on that first Pentecost had to be reminded of Jesus' words in John 16:13, "But when the Spirit of truth comes, He will guide you into all truth." Jesus reminded the disciples that they would need to learn to rely on the Holy Spirit much like they learned to rely on Him to lead and guide them rather than attempt to go it alone.

There are some Lutherans who find it difficult to talk about the work of the Holy Spirit apart from the celebration of Pentecost. Some worry about being connected with groups that seem intellectually inferior compared to our theological sophistication. Others worry that such conversations could lead to changes in worship style, a lack of control, spontaneity or new experiences.

There is sufficient reason for concern, but not for those reasons. There are abundant abuses throughout the church in the name of the Holy Spirit. It is easy for the attention to be focused on individual experience and authority. "Manifestations" of the Holy Spirit's presence can replace the focus on Christ. These experiences become the dividing line separating true Christians from false ones, etc. However, criticizing others and withdrawing from the conversation offers little help when we have much to give.

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I encourage you to look closely at Martin Luther's explanation to the third article of the Apostles' Creed in both the Small and Large Catechisms. Luther writes:

*I believe that I cannot by my own reason or strength believe in Jesus Christ, my Lord, or come to Him. But the Holy Spirit has called me by the Gospel, enlightened me with His gifts, sanctified and kept me in the true faith. In the same way He calls, gathers, enlightens, and sanctifies the whole Christian Church on earth and keeps it with Jesus Christ in the one true faith. In this Christian Church He daily and richly forgives all my sins and the sins of all believers. On the Last Day He will raise up me and all the dead and will give eternal life to me and to all believers in Christ. This is most certainly true.* (Small Catechism.)

You may be asked, "What do you mean by the words, 'I believe in the Holy Spirit?'"

You can then answer, "I believe that the Holy Spirit makes me holy, as His name implies."

"But how does He accomplish this, or what are His method and means to this end?"

Answer, "By the Christian Church, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. For in the first place, the Spirit has His own congregation in the world, which is the mother that conceives and bears every Christian through God's Word. Through the Word He reveals and preaches, He illumines and enkindles hearts, so that they understand, accept, cling to, and persevere in the Word." (Large Catechism)

As we prepare to celebrate Pentecost, we remember that even those closest to Jesus had to wait until they were empowered by the Holy Spirit. We realize that we cannot accomplish what Jesus commands us to accomplish in His name without the Holy Spirit. What empowers us is not our own confidence or conviction, our theology or intelligence, our personality or charm, but the Holy Spirit at work in us. The Great Commission — our mission, our ministry — cannot be accomplished apart from the Holy Spirit. There is nothing in the Church that is in the will of God apart from the Spirit of God.

Instead of avoiding the Holy Spirit, we are in desperate need of what the Holy Spirit has to offer us in order to overcome our timidity and give us confidence and boldness for proclaiming the Gospel. Because we can be unsure of the content of our faith and fearful of offending others or embarrassing ourselves, we remain quiet and say nothing when the needs are great and the opportunities abound. The power of the Holy Spirit is available to fill us, transform us, and afford us the immediate presence of Jesus.

In the *Atlantic Monthly*, columnist Jonathan Rauch writes that America has made "a major civilization advance" in recent years. Rauch, an atheist, is thrilled about a phenomenon he calls *apathetic theism* ("apathetic theism"). "It's not that people don't believe in God anymore," Rauch writes, "the majority will still say they believe. ... The faithful in America haven't been putting much thought or effort into their faith. They're looking for comfort and reassurance, not for a God who asks anything of them. Apathetic theists don't care about their own religion and care even less about the faith of others."

New York Times columnist David Brooks noticed a trend a few years ago and coined the term *flexidoxy* ("flexible beliefs").

"*Flexidoxy* describes the form of religion practiced by many educated young Americans, as opposed to orthodoxy. Basically, it means that people have become flexible in their belief system and look at religion as a giant smorgasbord from which they can pick and choose the beliefs that most suit them. They become the center of their own faith and adapt it to what they see as important."

Both *apathetic theism* and *flexidoxy* may well be the consequence and by-product of the church when it avoids the Holy Spirit, on one hand, or abuses it on the other. *Apathetic theism* and *flexidoxy* are grounded in the power of popularity and political correctness but not the power of the Holy Spirit.

Into this world, the Church must bring to bear what it alone possesses and is called to proclaim, the Gospel of Jesus Christ through the power and work of the Holy Spirit.

May the Holy Spirit fill us with true faith and boldness to proclaim it!



# Putting Faces on a Disaster

## Hurricane Sandy Relief Update

The work of the Atlantic City Long Term Recovery Group (ACLTRG) and St. Andrew By The Sea Lutheran Church, a NALC congregation in Atlantic City, N.J., might not have progressed as far and as fast as it has were it not for the generosity of individuals and congregations across the country — both in volunteer efforts and in financial support.

St. Andrew is a founding member of the ACLTRG and has been blessed to welcome volunteers to labor in rebuilding damaged homes, as well as to receive funds through NALC Disaster Response both to support the beginnings of the ACLTRG but, most importantly, to restore afflicted residents to safe and secure homes. To date more than \$93,000 in generous donations has been expended for the recovery and rebuilding efforts, and



additional funds are waiting to be turned into loving action.

Who has been helped? Let's put a face on the pain we seek to soothe — names have been changed to protect confidentiality but the stories are true.

Mary is a 56-year-old school crossing guard with an income of barely \$1,160 a month during the school year; she receives unemployment compensation in the summer. With an income not nearly enough to cover all of her bills, Mary works at odd jobs but also rents the lower level of her old home to a low-income friend at a reasonable monthly rent. Her home was assessed at \$22,200 in damage from Sandy, but with no savings or assets in reserve — and unable to afford expensive flood insurance — Mary turned to FEMA. FEMA was not permitted to assist beyond \$1,000 for repairs and \$1,888 in rental assistance while she was out of her home. FEMA regulations call Mary's home an "investment property," so she does not qualify for further restoration assistance. The ACLTRG intervened, obtaining an \$8,800 grant for heating and appliances, and a Robin Hood Foundation grant of \$4,000. The balance of \$9,400 was provided by an NALC Disaster Response grant through St. Andrew by the Sea Lutheran Church.

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Sophie is 64 years old with a daughter and two grandchildren living with her. She and her daughter are on disability, with a monthly household income of \$3,663 and savings of \$3,500. Her roof was damaged and the first floor living space had two feet of water in Sandy's wake. Flood insurance was an unaffordable luxury. She received \$4,707 from FEMA. The total repair cost is estimated at \$25,450. ACLTRG assisted in obtaining an \$11,000 grant for the roof and appliances, a Robin Hood Foundation grant of \$4,000, and an additional outside grant of \$1,450. The work is being finished thanks to \$9,000 provided by an NALC Disaster Response grant through St. Andrew.



*Photos provided by First Lutheran Church of Pontiac, Ill., from their recent work trip to New Jersey.*

The Rev. Dr. Harry Wendt of Crossways International calls the money God has blessed us with "love in potency" — love that is "warehoused" when we hold on to it but active in love when we let it go. The warehouse doors have been flung open and so much love is being transformed into action by the wonderful financial response of individuals and NALC churches.

Your volunteer labor is welcome. Contact St Andrew by the Sea Lutheran Church at [standrewbythesea@verizon.net](mailto:standrewbythesea@verizon.net) or 609-344-7333) if you wish to volunteer, and we will put you in touch with the ACLTRG. Thank you for your love!

Gifts to support NALC Disaster Response efforts may be made online at [www.thenalc.org](http://www.thenalc.org) or sent to:

NALC Disaster Response  
2299 Palmer Drive, Suite 220  
New Brighton, MN 55112

# Minnesota pastor speaks for pastors conference in Ethiopia

The Ethiopian Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus (EECMY), held its first ever Pastors Conference on April 4-5 at the Mekane Yesus Church in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. Throughout the planning of the event, the Rev. Yonas Yigas Dibisa, from the Division of Mission and Theology of the EECMY, was in conversation with the Rev. Timothy Lundeen, pastor of Grace Lutheran Church, Erksine, Minn., and dean of the Minkota Mission District about attending the conference.

When Pastor Yonas was in the United States for the NALC's 2012 Congregational Renewal Conference Nov. 7-9 in Columbus, Ohio, he also traveled around and visited congregations in the Midwest. Two of these congregations were in the Minkota Mission District: Grace Lutheran Church, Erskine, Minn., and Peace Lutheran Church, Devils Lake, N.D.

Pastor Lundeen was among his many hosts and had long and fruitful conversations with Pastor Yonas about the life of rural pastors in the Midwest. From these conversations, Pastor Yonas invited Pastor Lundeen to Ethiopia for the April 4-5 EECMY Pastors Conference. Pastor Yonas' interest in Pastor Lundeen came about because of Pastor Lundeen's unique understanding of farming, mechanics, and abilities to handle many tools used within the construction industry.

Pastor Yonas offered this invitation, "You are a true 'tent minister' in the modern day. You need to come to Ethiopia and encourage our pastors!"



*Pastors of the Ethiopian Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus gather for worship at the conference.*

After receiving the invitation, Pastor Lundeen and the people of Grace Lutheran Church devoted themselves to a month of prayer before any preparations could be made. Throughout the month they held conversations about the reasons why Pastor Lundeen should go to Ethiopia to visit and encourage the pastors of the EECMY. When the month of prayer was over, there was a unanimous vote given for the trip and travel. Pastor Lundeen then made the many necessary preparations and set out for the ancient land of Ethiopia. He was there April 2-8.

The Pastors Conference began in the morning on April 4. The Mekane Yesus Church in Addis Ababa was full of pastors from throughout Ethiopia. The worship leader opened the worship with prayers

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and chanting that sounded very much like our Lutheran liturgy. In fact, the setting used is a translation of the liturgy from the Lutheran Church of Sweden a century ago. "The liturgy was familiar enough that I could share in the congregation responses," Pastor Lundeen said. Even without any understanding of the Amharic language, he was able to participate throughout the two-hour morning session without an interpreter at his side.

Throughout the entire worship, there were only four words that he recognized.

These four words seem to sound the same in most very language. He has found this same experience to be true among the Eskimo people of northern Alaska. These four words are all that was needed to know the liturgy, the prayers and even to know when to speak the words in our own language during the Institution of the Sacrament and the Lord's Prayer: *Jesus, Christ, Alleluia, and Wonderful.*

Later in the day, three words were added to the vocabulary that kept him in conversation, even if he understood not a single other word, he was given a sense of what was happening, spoken, prayed, and sung, through the use of these few words and it was contagious. The added words were: *America, Minnesota and Timothy.*

Early in the afternoon session, he was introduced to the group of about 1,500 pastors who were present for the afternoon session. He introduced himself through a series of slides showing them the mounds of snow he left had behind in Minnesota. He used 10 slides as a way of introduction allowing them to see and hear how ministry happens in northern Minnesota.

"It would seem that we might have very little in common with Ethiopia when considering snow banks to barren rolling hills, frozen streams to dried



*Pastor Tim Lundeen of Erskine, Minn., speaks at the EECMY Pastors Conference.*

river beds, fat cattle to lean cattle, or even large farms to small farms. It turns out that even such differences are relative to the location and space in which we share our ministry and our work. Size and expectation are common factors: Larger productions have greater costs. Smaller productions have lesser costs, and similar are the ways the produce is handled. In the end, there is work to do and food on our tables. The size of most everything in America is large; in Ethiopia, they are smaller. Still the work hours are much the same. It is only daylight for 12 hours," he said.

"As pastors, we live and share and work side-by-side with our members in our locations, and encourage each other through the means given to us. And, we can work together in collective ways to assist in the gathering of resources which aid in the abilities of pastors to support ourselves in certain locations. In the Minkota Mission District, a pastor serving one of our mission congregations is a full-time farmer and serves two congregations which, even through working together, cannot support the full responsibility of support for a pastor. As a full-time farmer his resources support the work of the ministry," Pastor Lundeen said.

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“When speaking through an interpreter, there is no real sense about how much the presentation is reaching the ears of your listeners. The only way to know is what happens next,” he said. When the afternoon break came, he was surrounded by pastors who wanted to share their experiences, even how hearing him speak lightened another pastor’s spirit because he is a farmer and serves six house churches and helps run a school.

April 5 began with the opening worship and a choir to lead the singing. Over 2,000 pastors were in attendance and all of them joyful in song. “This was quite a moving event. The entire room was moving in song and praise through the leading of the choir. Many of the songs were sung for over 10 minutes, singing it first in Ormo and then in Amharic (two of the languages used in the EECMY), and depending on which group was most enthusiastic during the singing, it might be re-sung in the language which raised the highest spirit in the room,” he said.

After the singing, it was Pastor Lundeen’s turn to preach. The text was John 21:1-19 — the resurrected Jesus’ appearance to the disciples and the miraculous catch of fish. “Whether a church is made up of 7, 70, 700 or 7000, when we are alone on the water and left to ourselves, most especially after having seen the risen the Savior and then attempting to return to our former life, we can expect no catch. But, when we heed the voice of our Savior and follow after Him to feed His lambs and all who are His, we can expect blessings abounding,” he said.

As the afternoon waxed on, finally, there was the time set apart for the meeting. During these deliberations, he was given the podium again “to share with the pastors how we have formed ministeriums, prayer groups, study groups and conference meetings and local fellowships within our mission districts and communities. When I was finished, an appointed moderator took to the podium and called the meeting to order.” By this time he had interpreters voluntarily sitting on both sides of him telling him what was being shared.

The deliberations called for the formation of the “EECMY National Fellowship of Pastors.” Seven pastors were nominated and unanimously elected to the planning commission of the Fellowship of



Pastors. Two of the pastors sitting next to him were nominated and elected. Then an amount was set for the collection of dues so there will be financial support for pastors when they need it and resources to plan future events.

ECMY President, the Rev. Dr. Wakseyoum Idosa, gave the final blessing and called on those present to hold on to the richness. President Idosa told the pastors it is up to him and them to do this.

During the other five days of his visit, Pastor Lundeen attended a wedding feast; visited and prayed with a widow and family during their nine day period of mourning; spoke to 500 students at an all-girls’ school; and even shared the stage with a national recording artist (for five minutes he was a rock star). He was welcomed into the conversations with representatives meeting with the leadership of the EECMY and the Fellowship of Christian Council and Churches in the Great Lakes and Horn of Africa (FECCLAHA). On Sunday morning he preached at the small congregation in Holota, about 15 miles northwest of Addis Ababa.

“It was a humbling experience to participate with the leadership of the EECMY, with Pastor Yonas and the support people he provided for me every day; to serve the pastors of the EECMY through the support of Bishop Bradosky and the NALC. My spirit is lifted after having spent a week with so many pastors and church members during this short stay in Ethiopia. The grace and generosity given by the leaders of the EECMY is a testimony that they are committed to the partnership already growing between our two churches,” he said.

# Ecumenical Summit on Biblical Marriage and Sexuality

A landmark ecumenical summit took place May 3-5 at Church of the Holy Communion in Dallas, Texas. The theme of the meeting was "Biblical Teaching on Marriage and Sexuality." Presentations and discussion focused on the shared historic understanding of marriage as a holy estate, divinely created by God to be the union of man and woman.

The gathering was the result of ongoing multi-lateral consultations between the Anglican Church in North America (ACNA), Lutheran Church—Canada (LCC), The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (LCMS), and the North American Lutheran Church (NALC). The summit involved representatives from each denomination and included prayer, denominational presentations, and a lecture by Mark Galli, editor of *Christianity Today* magazine.

Galli's presentation was titled, "Blest Be the Grace that Binds: The Gift and Beauty of Marriage as God Intends It." He is author of a number of books, including *Beyond Smells and Bells: The Wonder and Power of Christian Liturgy*; *Chaos and Grace: Discovering the Liberating Work of the Holy Spirit*; *God Wins: Heaven, Hell, and Why the Good News Is Better than Love Wins*; and a forthcoming book, *Karl Barth: An Introductory Biography for Evangelicals*.

As North American culture wrestles with issues of marriage and family, the participants of this ecumenical dialogue sought clarity and



*Participants in the summit, from left: Mark Galli; Bishop Ray Sutton; Pastor David Wendel; Prof. John Pless; Pastor Mark Chavez; Pastor Ken Hennings; Dr. Fred Baue; Dr. Joel Lehenbauer; Prof. John Stephenson; Pastor Larry Vogel; and Dr. Jonathan S. Riches.*

agreement on Scriptural teaching, with the intention of developing a common statement. A draft was presented and discussed, and a final form will be forthcoming. The statement is intended to provide clear, concise instruction to clergy and members of the participating denominations, but also to be an unequivocal affirmation of Biblical teaching with regard to marriage between male and female as the essential and unchanging foundation for home, family, church, and society.

The Rt. Rev. Ray Sutton, a bishop of the Anglican Church in North America and host for the summit said of the gathering, "God calls His people in every generation to proclaim the clarity of the Gospel

to the points of greatest confusion. In our generation, marriage and sexuality have become the points of cultural confusion that keep the western world from grasping the most important image of God's relation to His people, marriage. Confessional believers must learn again to speak with one voice."

Professor John Stephenson, Concordia Theological Seminary, St. Catharines, Ontario, affirmed the gathering, stating: "Our unforced consensus on this bitterly contested topic rests on wide-ranging but still incomplete agreement on the Christian Faith as a whole. As the participants get to know and cherish each other as

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# Be Bold and Unafraid!

At times, pastors are accused of “preaching to the choir” — meaning we are preaching to those who agree with us, or we are preaching to the wrong audience — to those who are already “converted” to our position.

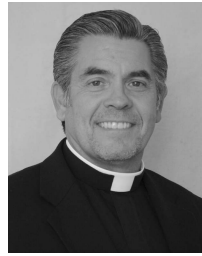
Well, in this month’s “Ministry Matters,” I am definitely *not* “preaching to the choir.” I’m not speaking in this newsletter piece, particularly, to those who are already pastors and members of the NALC. Rather, I’m speaking to those who are *not* in the NALC, but who would like to be. I’m speaking to those pastors and congregational members who yearn to be in a body, such as the NALC — where we state clearly and unequivocally that we believe the Bible to be God’s authoritative Word, eternal and unchanging; a body where we believe that God’s Word is both Law and Gospel; a body where we affirm that the Lutheran Confessions are true reflections of that Word, and so a body which stands firm with regard to the divine ordering of God’s creation.

We know that many such pastors and congregational leaders receive and read this newsletter — so it’s to you that I speak in this article. I dedicate this Ministry Matters to all those pastors and congregations who wish to come into the NALC — but haven’t yet taken steps to do so!

And what do I have to say to you?

**Be bold — do not be afraid — take a stand for the truth of God’s Word!**

I trust it’s no surprise that each of us NALC staff members continue to be invited to visit congregations which are beginning the process of affiliating with the NALC. It should also be no surprise that many pastors and congregational leaders have *not* done so because of fear — fear of existing power structures, fear of empty threats, and fear of reprisal. Pastors in such situations are often demoralized and sometimes, depressed — having the sense that they’re trapped, forced into remaining in their current situations without options. One experiences little hope for the future and so little joy in life and in ministry when you serve in such a situation.



## *Ministry Matters*

**Pastor David Wendel**

Assistant to the Bishop  
for Ministry and Ecumenism

I can honestly say that before my former congregation and I chose to affiliate with the North American Lutheran Church, the best I hoped for was to keep my head down, avoid notice and get through my remaining years of ministry being faithful in my local context until retirement. That’s truly a sad situation, but reality for many Lutheran pastors and congregations. NALC leadership (staff and deans) meet with many pastors in just such situations. The difference, however, is that many of these pastors and congregations have decided to be bold and unafraid! These pastors and congregations have decided to initiate conversations, to provide information, to begin a process of discernment regarding denominational affiliation.

While difficult at times, while there may be challenges, taking a stand for the truth of God’s Word *always* bears fruit! When pastors and congregations discern that they really are being drawn to the NALC, it often leads to renewal and refreshment. When pastors and congregations begin the process of affiliating with the NALC, they often find new strength for ministry, renewed commitment to mission, new energy and vitality for the essential work of spreading the Gospel, making disciples, teaching others all that Jesus has commanded us (Matthew 28:19-20).

In so many ways, Lutheranism in the last 30 years or so has gone astray and lost focus on the essentials of the Christian faith and the Lutheran tradition. Is it any wonder, then, that God’s Word has been forsaken, Biblical morality has been sidelined or twisted beyond recognition, social action has replaced the proclamation of the Gospel as the primary task of the Body of Christ?

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The North American Lutheran Church is working to refocus Lutheranism on a strong foundation. We are striving to be Christ-Centered; Mission-Driven; Traditionally-Grounded; and Congregationally-Focused.

We are working intentionally to move our congregations and pastors from seeing the Church as institution, to understanding the Church to be a body of disciples following Jesus in faith, obedience and service to God and neighbor! Our pastors, congregational leaders and members are finding new joy and excitement in the NALC — not because of the “institution,” but because of the movement of the Holy Spirit in our midst.

God alone is the hope for our future, in Christ Jesus. Being pastors and congregations of the NALC assures us of that hope and gives great joy because once again, we are part of that tradition known as the Lutheran reforming movement — committed to Jesus Christ — the Savior of the world — the same, yesterday, today and forever!

What does it take to begin a discussion, to begin a process of leaving the past behind, standing for the truth of God’s Word? Listen to the testimony of the New Testament:

+ “They saw the **boldness** of Peter and John” (Acts 4).

+ “Grant to thy servants to speak thy Word with all **boldness**” (Acts 4:29).

+ “They were all filled with the Holy Spirit and spoke the Word of God with **boldness**” (Acts 4:31).

+ “Paul and Barnabas spoke out **boldly**” (Acts 13:46).

+ “So they remained for a long time, speaking **boldly** for the Lord” (Acts 14:3).

+ “Since we have such a hope, we are very **bold**” (2 Corinthians 3:12).

+ “... In Whom we have **boldness** and confidence of access through our faith in Him” (Ephesians 3:12).

+ “That utterance may be given me in opening my mouth **boldly** to proclaim the mystery of the Gospel” (Ephesians 6:19).

+ “And most of the brethren have been made confident in the Lord because of my imprisonment, and are much more **bold** to speak the Word of God without fear.” (Philippians 1:14).

We invite and encourage those who yearn to be a part of the North American Lutheran Church to be bold and unafraid! We are always available to talk, answer questions, visit congregations and assist those who are interested in the NALC!

# Ecumenical Summit

## *Continued from Page 11*

brothers and sisters in Christ and to come together in prayer, we hope that the Lord will graciously move us toward oneness as His disciples.”

The Rev. Ken Hennings, president of the Texas District of The Lutheran Church – Missouri Synod, reflecting on the summit, stated, “Attending this meeting was very encouraging as leaders of different church bodies focused on the goodness and blessing of marriage between one man and one woman and how to share this positive view with our culture.”

“Our Lord immensely blessed us in these Anglican-Lutheran consultations,” said the Rev. Mark Chavez, General Secretary of the North American Lutheran Church. He continued, “The Lord has gathered us as one in Him with strong agreement in our confession of the Christian faith. Our agreement includes the Biblical norms for marriage and sexuality. I am hopeful for our common statement and for mutually presenting a clear Biblical teaching of marriage and sexuality throughout our churches that will be a blessing for all of North America.”

Other participants were the Very Rev. Dr. Jonathan S. Riches, Reformed Episcopal Seminary (ACNA); the Rev. Dr. Frederic Baue (LCMS); the Rev. Dr. Joel Lehenbauer, Executive Director of the Commission on Theology and Church Relations (LCMS); the Rev. Professor John Pless, Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne (LCMS); the Rev. Larry Vogel, Associate Executive Director of the Commission on Theology and Church Relations, (LCMS); and the Rev. Dr. David Wendel, Assistant to the Bishop for Ministry and Ecumenism, (NALC).



# Madagascar facing plague of locusts

A locust plague is threatening the livelihoods of 13 million people in Madagascar — 9 million of whom earn a living from agriculture. Locust infestations, if untreated, could wipe out food crops and livestock grazing lands — and with it a family's ability to provide for itself.

The heart of the locust plague is in the country's southwestern region — an area prone to drought and cyclones, where more than 80 percent of the people live below the poverty line. In February, Cyclone Haruna flooded rice fields in the region's coastal areas, causing significant damage while also creating ideal breeding conditions for locusts. Rice production is central to Madagascar's economy.

The United Nations is trying to raise more than \$22 million by June to launch a three-year emergency program to combat the locust plague that threatens the country's next crop seasons and the food security of more than half the country's population.

Currently, about half the country is infested by hoppers and flying swarms — each swarm made up of billions of plant-devouring insects. At least two-thirds of the country could be infested by locusts by September.



*Locusts fill the skies of Madagascar, threatening the food supplies of millions of people.*

Nearly 60 percent of the island's more than 22 million people could be threatened by a significant worsening of hunger in a country that already has extremely high rates of food insecurity and malnutrition. In the poorest southern regions, where the plague started, around 70 percent of households are food insecure.

The plague now threatens 60 percent of the country's rice production. Rice is the main staple in Madagascar, where 80 percent of the population lives on less than a dollar per day. The locust swarms would also consume most green vegetation that might normally serve as pasture for livestock.



*Locusts darken the skies of Madagascar.*

Please pray for the people of Madagascar during this difficult time. You can provide assistance to the efforts of the Malagasy Lutheran Church by supporting Friends of Madagascar Mission (FOMM). FOMM is a recognized mission organization by the NALC. You can learn more about FOMM online at [www.madagascarmission.org](http://www.madagascarmission.org).

The funds will be administered through Ejeda Hospital's Nutrition Program (which is located in the heart of the area damaged by Cyclone Harua and the locust infestation).

Gifts may be sent to:  
Friends of Madagascar Mission  
P.O. Box 46381; Eden Prairie, MN 55344

# Thank you for your love in Christ

Dear friends in Christ,

We will never be able to express adequately our deep thanks to you, the members of the Body of Christ, for your love and care for our family.

Within hours of Kevin's death we began receiving a flood of messages, calls and cards from people not only in our NALC churches, but other Lutheran, Protestant and Catholic churches from all across North America. Your immediate outpouring of love helped us bear the shock of losing Kevin and your continuing prayers and love help us bear our grief.

The Body of Christ is literally wrapping us in His arms and gently carrying us through our grief. We have been enveloped in a powerful cloud of witnesses from the moment we learned of Kevin's death.

We give thanks that within two days of Kevin's death Pastors A.J. Domines and Steve Bowser offered the use of their ELCA churches for Kevin's service. Their care for us was essential because our congregation, Reformation Lutheran Church, worships in the Eastern Mennonite Mission in Lancaster County and the building was inadequate for Kevin's service.

The burial service for Kevin was awesome. Bishop John, Pastor Luke Seamon (our pastor), and Pastor Domines



***Kevin Michael Chavez, the 19-year-old son of NALC General Secretary Mark Chavez and his wife Jocelyn, died on Monday, April 8. He was killed in a tragic accident. Funeral services were Saturday, April 13. Bishop John Bradosky's sermon from the funeral is posted on the NALC website.***

planned and led an inspiring service. What a sight to see the choir filled with pastors and the pews packed with people! We were surrounded by the glorious singing of the pastors in front of us and the people behind us.

If you have not read Bishop John's sermon (which is posted on the NALC website), we encourage you to do so. We are forever indebted to John for preaching the Gospel with such love,

care and power on that day.

Thank you for your prayers, comforting words, and offers of assistance. We cannot imagine grieving the loss of a child without being surrounded by the members of the Body of Christ and without having the hope of the Resurrection.

Many of you said to us apologetically, "I don't know what to say," but in truth your words were very comforting. You didn't know what to say and neither did we. The loss of a child is indescribable. We now have a much deeper appreciation for what Mary experienced in watching Jesus die, and what our Heavenly Father experienced in losing His only Son.

Most of all we thank the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. We thank our Heavenly Father for sending His Son to die for us so that we might live forever in His Kingdom. We thank Jesus for giving up His life for us to defeat sin, death and the devil. We thank the Holy Spirit for keeping us in true faith in Jesus. We hold onto the promise that once we are placed in the hands of the Good Shepherd, no one can snatch us from His hands.

In the love of Christ,

**Jocelyn and Mark Chavez  
and family**

# Moving from Membership to Discipleship

I recently read an opinion piece in the *New York Times* regarding the increasing acrimony in American culture between non-believers and people of faith. The columnist even introduced readers to the anthropological term *schismogenesis*. This refers to when people with opposing viewpoints debate their differences and, as a result, become that much angrier with one another.

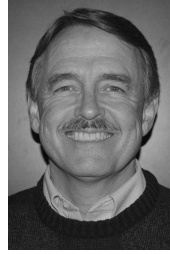
I couldn't agree more with this assessment. We have been witnesses — especially in the last 10 to 15 years — to growing levels of religious *schismogenesis* in American society.

It's certainly not like it was in the years of my youth — growing up in the 1950s and 1960s. Catholic writer George Weigel, quoted in the March 25 issue of *Time* magazine, explained what things used to be like back then from a Catholic perspective. "You could 'learn Catholic' by breathing the air in ... the 1950s Baltimore in which I grew up. No more. The air has become chilly; even toxic." Weigel insists that the way to respond to this is not to retreat, or in some sense throw in the towel. "The Gospel has to be boldly proposed and radically embodied if the church is to grow and the wounds of a culture of self-absorption are going to be healed."

As for an evangelical Protestant perspective on this, authors David Platt and Francis Chan both seem to agree that the appropriate response to the current culture is not to try to maintain or re-create nominal Christianity, but rather advocate for a more radical kind of Christian discipleship.

Platt goes so far as to say, "One of the greatest enemies of disciple-making is good things in the church." In other words, disciple-making and institutional success do not always go hand in hand. He also says, "Scores of people culturally think they are Christians (when) Biblically they are not followers of Christ."

Francis Chan claims that we shouldn't be able to distinguish between "disciples" and "Christians." Referencing Acts 11:26 — "The disciples were called Christians first at Antioch" — he says, "How



## *In Pursuit of the Great Commission*

**Pastor Don Brandt**

can you have two different categories? It doesn't make any sense."

So let's assume that we are all advocates for disciple-making and we acknowledge that all Christians should be aspiring to be faithful disciples of Jesus Christ. The New Testament, as you probably know, doesn't use the word *member*, at least not in the sense of formal membership in an institution. But how do we begin to focus on *discipleship* instead of *membership*?

In the March-April issue of *Outreach Magazine*, Ed Stetzer shares what he considers to be common mistakes made by Christian leaders as they attempt to model discipleship. One mistake, according to Stetzer, is to "equate discipleship with religious knowledge." He explains that the priority is not *information*, but "Christ-like *transformation*." I agree. In our congregations, we sometimes give the impression that knowing more necessarily leads to a life of faithfulness.

Another example of what Stetzer describes as a "broken" model for discipleship is thinking we can somehow "program" for it. (Guilty as charged.) I used to equate congregational programs as almost always leading to greater faithfulness. Not true. There are plenty of examples of very busy, growing churches preaching a false gospel. Besides, growth in discipleship is something that we will not always be able to measure. And growing disciples will sometimes require the kind of individualized, one-to-one mentoring that will not necessarily be reflected in congregational statistics.

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# Moving from Membership to Discipleship

*Continued from Page 16*

Stetzer also warns readers that discipleship does not typically happen without a concerted effort on the part of Christian leaders. There are no shortcuts to helping our people become faithful disciples of Jesus Christ. The challenge never ends and progress will tend to occur incrementally over time.

Since nominal, membership-focused Christianity seems to have lost its popular, cultural appeal over the last few decades, we are not just faced with new challenges; we also have a new opportunity.

My sense is that the key might just be a Christian witness that focuses on the call to and implications of radical Christian discipleship. As to the decline of institutional Christianity in our culture, consider the words of Richard Mouw: "Christ breathes new life and new forms into being in response to institutional decay." And as to our appropriate response in the face of this challenge? A recent editorial in *Christianity Today* (March 2013), written by Mark Galli and Andy Crouch, said it well.

*There will always be Christian fundamentalisms — strident calls to flee the world and purify the church — and Christian liberalisms — misguided attempts to align the church with the world's agenda. But as the past century shows, both are self-limiting movements. They are unable to retain their children or persuade a wider public. But only evangelical faith — immersed in the Word, animated by the Gospel, waiting in hope, and empowered by the Spirit — can offer news that is good enough to pass on to our children's children and to engage a wary, weary world.*

**Pastor Don Brandt serves as pastor of Our Savior's Lutheran Church in Salem, Ore. You may contact him at [DonB@oursaviorssalem.org](mailto:DonB@oursaviorssalem.org).**

# Bishop Bradosky to host Holy Land tour

Bishop John Bradosky of the North American Lutheran Church will host a tour of the Holy Land Nov. 12-21.

The tour of Israel and Jordan includes Jerusalem, Bethlehem, Nazareth, and many sites in Galilee. It is scheduled to leave from Columbus, Ohio, but arrangements can be made for other departure cities.

For more information contact Pam Charas at 937-434-0993 or [mcharas@earthlink.net](mailto:mcharas@earthlink.net) or Jerusalem Tours at 888-373-8687 or visit their website: [www.jerusalem tours.com](http://www.jerusalem tours.com).

# Women of NALC to focus on missions

"Connecting in Mission to Share God's Love" is the theme of the Women of the NALC annual gathering on Wednesday, Aug. 7, in Pittsburgh, Pa. All women are invited to join in a day of spiritual formation as they learn of mission ministries.

Pastor Josh Hansen of St. Luke's Lutheran Church of Colorado Springs, Colo., will explain how to define, identify and qualify mission needs so that women's groups may create mission partnerships and develop those mission relationships.

There will be times for fellowship, idea sharing and election of new members to The Women's Council. Meet other sisters in Christ, both in your region and across the country as we come together for a full day to Share God's Love.

During the 9 a.m. registration hour before the meeting, members of The Women's Council will be available for an informal "Question and Answer, Idea Sharing and Brainstorming Session" for women to learn about the WNALC, ask questions and share individual ministries. Registration is \$60 (with lunch) and \$35 (without lunch).

# We are Baptized!

In the *Brief Order for Confession and Forgiveness*, we are reminded of the fact that we are baptized. This order begins in the name of the Holy Trinity. The rubric gives this instruction, "The minister leads the congregation in the invocation. The sign of the cross may be made by all in remembrance of their Baptism" (*Lutheran Book of Worship*, page 56). Remembrance of our Baptism, a practice suggested by Martin Luther, informs us again and again during our pilgrimage through this mortal life that we are united to Christ.

As Luther taught, confession and absolution are connected to Holy Baptism where the sinful self is drowned and a new self arises (See *The Sacrament of Holy Baptism* in *The Small Catechism*). We remember our Baptism every time we confess our sins and are forgiven. In the midst of the lifelong struggle between the flesh and the Spirit that all of us believers experience, we are to remember that we are Christ's own and members of His body, the Church; because we are grafted into Him by Baptism.

At the Easter Vigil, we renew our baptismal vows by renouncing "all the forces of evil, the devil, and all his empty promises," professing our faith in the recitation of the baptismal creed (Apostles' Creed), and reaffirming our Christian commitment. Water may be sprinkled (called after the Latin word, *asperges*, meaning "you shall sprinkle") on the congregation in remembrance of Baptism. The Apostle Paul writes, "Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were buried therefore with Him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life. For if we have been united with Him in a death like His, we shall certainly be united with Him in a resurrection like His" (Romans 6:3-5).

Confirmation is another occasion for the remembrance of Baptism. It is an affirmation of the baptismal vows and prayer with the laying on of hands for the strengthening of the gifts of the Holy Spirit by those who have completed a prescribed course of instruction, especially focused on *The Small Catechism*. Confirmation, which means



## *Words on Worship*

**Pastor Michael G. Tavella**

strengthening, is to lead us to greater responsibility in the life of the Church. New members, especially the baptized who have been away from the church for an extended period, may enter the congregation through reaffirmation of baptismal promises and prayer that they may be strengthened with the Holy Spirit and that God's sevenfold gifts of grace may increase in them.

The *Paschal Blessing*, also a remembrance of Baptism, may be included on Sundays at the end of Morning Prayer or used separately, especially at baptismal anniversaries. The leader may conduct the *Paschal Blessing* from the baptismal font. The *Paschal Blessing* begins with a passage from Galatians 3: 27, "As many as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ," and the Gospel for Easter in which the angels at the empty tomb announce to the women the resurrection of Jesus.

These texts, set to music, are followed by the *Te Deum*. In this Trinitarian hymn, we along with the whole creation praise God the Father. The *Sanctus*, "Holy, holy, holy," also sung in the Eucharistic Prayer, follows after the acknowledgment that the angels, cherubim, and seraphim endlessly praise the Lord. The glorious company of apostles, the noble fellowship of prophets, and the white-robed army of martyrs also lift their voices to the Lord God.

The Son of God, Jesus Christ, is worthy of worship along with the Holy Spirit. In direct address, we praise Christ for His redemptive work. He, the King of glory and the eternal Son, has set us free, overcome the sting of death, and opened to us believers the Kingdom of Heaven. He is seated at

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the right hand of God and will return as judge. At the end of the hymn, we ask Christ to help us, who were bought with the price of His blood, and to bring us to everlasting life. The Paschal Mystery of our redemption in the death and resurrection of Christ is the theme of the Paschal Blessing.

A prayer, addressed to the Father, who gave us Christ to suffer death for our redemption and to deliver us from the power of death by His resurrection, follows the *Te Deum*. We ask that we may die daily to sin so that we may live forever with Christ who lives and reigns with the Father and the Holy Spirit now and without end.

The *Paschal Blessing*, entirely choral, is a remembrance of Baptism, which unites us to Christ's death and resurrection. It is yet another liturgical way to remind us that we are baptized.

Baptismal imagery is used in the *Burial of the Dead*. When the pall, representing a baptismal garment, is placed on the coffin, the words from Romans 6, previously quoted, regarding the meaning of Baptism are recited. Baptismal imagery is found elsewhere in this liturgy. The goal of Baptism is passage from death to life in God's Kingdom. One of the petitions in *The Prayers* reads, "Grant that all who have been baptized into Christ's death and resurrection may die to sin and rise to newness of life and that through the grave and gate of death we may pass with him to our joyful resurrection" (*LBW*, page 209).

Our Christian life begins, continues, and ends in the Sacrament of Holy Baptism, that is, our unity with Christ in His death and resurrection. In *The Small Catechism*, Luther defines what the Sacrament is and states its continuing relevance to the life of a Christian. Baptism is water used with God's Word. In it, the Lord God forgives believers' sins, delivers from both death and the devil, and gives life everlasting. Baptism means that our sinful self is drowned through daily repentance so that a new self may arise.

We are also strengthened in our daily pilgrim journey by the Sacrament of the Altar, Holy Communion, of which a Christian regularly partakes. In *Eucharistic Prayer III* in the *Lutheran Book of Worship*, the benefits of the Sacrament are

recited. We ask in the prayer that we who share in the body and blood of Christ "may be filled with heavenly peace and joy, and, receiving the forgiveness of sin, may be sanctified in soul and body, and have our portion with all your saints." The benefits are the same in both Sacraments. God uses several means to give us His gifts, beginning with the initiatory Sacrament of Holy Baptism.

The Sacraments together with the Word of God, read from the Holy Scriptures and preached by the pastor, create and renew faith in Christ. The Holy Spirit uses these means for our salvation and for the good of the entire catholic Church. Luther writes, "the Holy Spirit has called me through the Gospel, enlightened me with his gifts, and sanctified and kept me in the true faith. In the same way he calls, gathers, enlightens, and sanctifies the whole Christian church on earth, and keeps it united with Jesus Christ in the one true faith" (*The Small Catechism*.)

The liturgical life of the Church has a central place in the heart of every true believer. It is in Holy Baptism, usually celebrated in public worship on Sunday morning that unites us to the Body of Christ, the Church. Together with our remembrance of Holy Baptism, Christian life is sustained by the hearing the Word of God and receiving the Sacrament of the Altar. The assertion that a Christian need not worship with the community of Christ does not reflect the Biblical witness or the teachings of the Church, founded on that witness.

In *The Small Catechism*, Luther writes these words in his explanation of the Third Commandment, "We are to fear and love God so that we do not neglect his Word and the preaching of it, but regard it as holy and gladly hear and learn it." The preaching of the Word occurs when the Church gathers. Christians who are unable to attend worship because of sickness or other circumstances can receive the ministrations of the Church where they abide. Many elderly who no longer can come to Church have told me of how much they miss worship. In our witness when attendance is a subject of conversation, in the gentlest way we can, we must insist that worship is essential to every Christian. Peter writes, "honor Christ the Lord as holy, always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and respect" (1 Peter 3:15).

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Our worship is a witness to the world. In it, we declare our faith in Christ and the faith (the body of doctrine) to which we adhere. Out of our faith we are faithful to the Lord in all that we do, say, and think. When we sin, we stand at the foot of the cross and ask forgiveness, given to us by the Lord through absolution and the Sacraments and announced to us in the reading of Scriptures and the preaching of the Word.

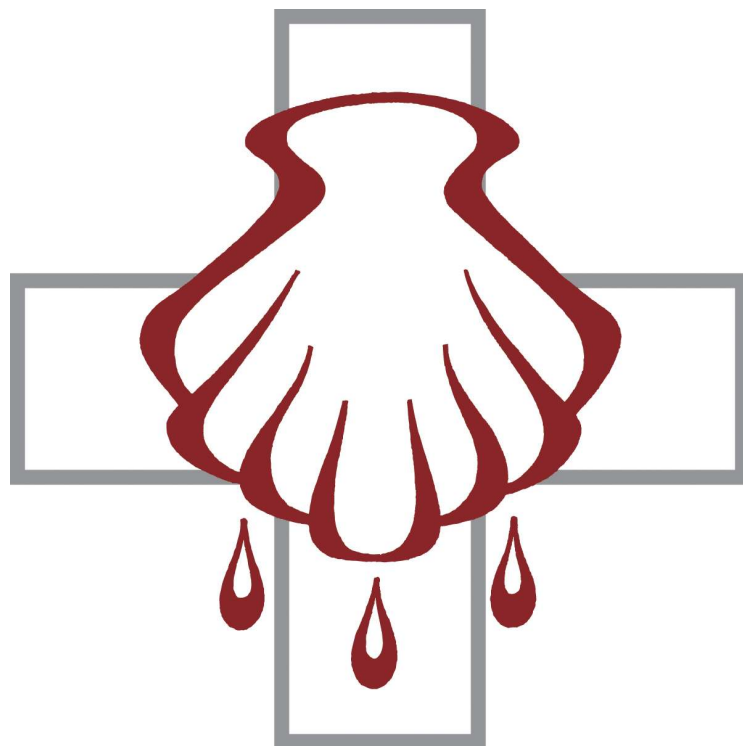
Our witness begins intramurally (within the walls) in worship and extends extramurally (outside of the walls) to the world. When we witness in the world, we introduce Christ to the unbeliever and invite this person to the assembly for worship. Our extramural activity should bring individuals to the holy precinct for intramural worship. The Church building is a holy precinct, because it is set aside for a holy purpose, the worship of the Triune God. A holy people, sanctified by grace, receive holy things, the Word and Sacraments. “Holy things for holy people” (*Liturgy of Saint John Chrysostom*).

In our worship, we realize again and again that the whole creation is filled with the holiness of the omnipresent and only God. “Holy, holy, holy Lord, Lord God of power and might: Heaven and earth are full of your glory” (*LBW*, page 69). “Where shall I go from your Spirit? Or where shall I flee from your presence?” (Psalm 139:7). We cannot escape the presence of God. And believers don’t want to.

When we witness, Christ is with us, for He is ubiquitous (from Latin, *ubique*, meaning everywhere). Now at the right hand of God, He is fully present to us in His person according to both His divine and human natures (See Articles VII and VIII on “The Lord’s Supper” and “The Person of Christ” in the *Formula of Concord*).

The Holy Spirit employs the Word of God, rightly divided into Law and Gospel, spoken by us to another to draw that person to the font (Latin, *fons*, meaning spring or fountain) where he receives God’s baptismal grace, is marked with the cross of Christ, and is sealed with the Holy Spirit. We are emissaries of the Church in our witness.

The conflict between the old sinful self and new self begins in Baptism until the day that sin, death, and



the power of the devil are swept away. In the struggle, we remind ourselves as Luther did, “We are baptized!”

In Ingmar Bergman’s film, *Winter Light* (*Nattvard-gästerna*, literally, *The Communicants*), a pastor named Tomas Ericsson has lost his faith. For him, God is silent. He can no longer believe and feels a certain freedom at his loss of faith. He no longer needs to explain and justify the ways of God in a world of cruelty and suffering. The film begins with his presiding at Holy Communion, a scene that would be familiar to any Lutheran, in a small country church in Sweden. He is going through the motions without faith. He is still grieving after five years for his dead wife. Märta, a woman with whom he had had an affair for two years after the death of his wife, awkward and inappropriate for a pastor or any Christian, and an atheist, loves him and wishes to marry him. He has become cold, and even cruel, toward her. Because of his loss of faith, he is not able to help a parishioner who comes to him in desperation.

The film ends neither with his falling in love with Märta nor with a renewed belief. In the last scene, Tomas is leading worship on the same Sunday in another congregation he serves. Only two people, Märta and the sexton, are in attendance along with the organist. Ironically, Pastor Ericsson turns to his small congregation and recites the *Sanctus*.

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There is much conflict in Tomas Ericsson but not the struggle of the Spirit against the flesh, but the struggle of the flesh against the flesh. There is only the psychological conflict of the lapsed, not the spiritual conflict of the redeemed. We must remember that complete spiritual healing comes only as the result of a lifelong battle of the Spirit against the flesh. We are completely mired in our sins, when only flesh contends against flesh. In this condition, there is no salvation.

There are times when we feel like we are losing our faith. God seems silent. We doubt and despair. Our sins are such a heavy burden. At times, we may only see the dark pit. "Out of the depths, I cry to you, O Lord! O Lord, hear my voice! Let your ears be attentive to the voice of my pleas for mercy!" (Psalm 130:1-2). We must remember that we are baptized. Some of us may have known the despair of Pastor Tomas Ericsson; but, by the grace of God, have been brought back from the edge of the abyss. God be praised! All of us have known difficult times in our faith journey. Luther himself was susceptible to bouts of spiritual depression.

As Luther advises, we must cling to God's Word, not our faith, for faith can be fickle. God's Word can never be so. We must always rely on God's Word, and His Word alone. We must pray that the Holy Spirit will continue to work in us so that we may be true disciples and servants of Jesus Christ. Worship in the Spirit, the only true worship, is a gift of God. We pray fervently that the Spirit will always work in us. The text of the classic liturgy, rooted in the Great Tradition, comes alive when we are immersed in the Holy Spirit.

In the liturgy, God descends to us in Word and Sacrament. By it, we offer our corporate praise to God. Through it, our faith is strengthened. From it, we serve the world. "Go in peace. Serve the Lord." The Lord, one God in three Persons, comes to us and reveals Himself in words and simple signs, preached and administered in the body of Christ. The Word and Sacraments strengthen the faith of believers and create faith in unbelievers.

Our spiritual sacrifice of our very selves (see Romans 12) is a response to the descent of the

Lord into our worship, where he distributes His gifts. "Merciful Father, we offer with joy and thanksgiving what you have first given us — ourselves, our time, and our possessions, signs of your gracious love. Receive them for the sake of Him who offered Himself for us, Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen" (LBW, page 67).

Let us always remember to take into the world the Lord Jesus Christ and the joy and commitment that come from His love for us. The post-Communion prayer found in the *Deutsche Messe* (German Mass) of Luther expresses the dynamic of the Christian life. "We give you thanks, almighty God that you have refreshed us through the healing power of this gift of life; and we pray that in your mercy you would strengthen, through this gift, in faith toward you and in fervent love toward one another; for the sake of Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen" (LBW, page 74).

"We are baptized!" As a result, we are a people of faith in Christ and of love that reaches out to others. We could not be a more blessed people. "Thanks be to God."

It is fitting to end this worship series with a hymn attributed to Saint Patrick, *Saint Patrick's Breastplate*:

*I bind unto myself today  
The strong name of the Trinity  
By invocation of the same,  
The Three in One and One in Three.*

And further on,

*Christ be with me, Christ within me,  
Christ behind me, Christ before me,  
Christ beside me, Christ to win me,  
Christ to comfort and restore me,  
Christ beneath me, Christ above me,  
Christ in quiet, Christ in danger,  
Christ in hearts of all that love me,  
Christ in mouth of friend and stranger.*

***Pastor Michael G. Tavella serves Holy Trinity Evangelical Lutheran Church in Abington, Pa. You may contact him at [MGTavella@msn.com](mailto:MGTavella@msn.com). This is the last of his series of articles on worship. We thank him for sharing this series with NALC News readers.***

# Nominating Committee Report

The 2013 Nominating Committee of the North American Lutheran Church is pleased to announce those who have been nominated to serve on the NALC Executive Council and the NALC Court of Adjudication:

## **Executive Council - Lay Member (4-year term)**

- + Matthew Burkhart - Columbus, Ohio
- + Richard Jansak - Hendersonville, North Carolina
- + Paul O'Malley - Auburn, Indiana
- + Frank Polkowski - East Amherst, New York

## **Executive Council - Ordained Minister (4-year term)**

- + Pastor Bassam Abdallah - Hammond, Indiana
- + Pastor Cathi Braasch - Elwood, Nebraska
- + Pastor Phillip Gagnon - St. Albert, Alberta
- + Pastor John Hopper - Hot Springs, South Dakota
- + Pastor Eddy Perez - Miami, Florida
- + Pastor Royan Rodney - Middleburgh, New York
- + Pastor Amy Schiffrin - Elkader, Iowa
- + Pastor Donna Smith - Champaign, Illinois
- + Pastor Solveig Zamzow - Grafton, Iowa

## **Court of Adjudication (4-year term)**

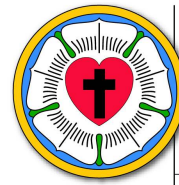
*(Two persons to be elected.)*

- + Jon Evans - Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania
- + Pastor Jeffray Greene - Rantoul, Illinois

The 2013 NALC Convocation August 8-9 in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, will elect one lay person and one pastor to the Executive Council and two members of the Court of Adjudication.

The Nominating Committee requested nominations from NALC congregations and NALC members by sending a request to congregations and by including requests for nominations in the *NALC News*.

Those who were nominated were asked to provide biographical information using a form developed by the committee.



**NALC**  
North American Lutheran Church

This biographical information on the candidates is provided in accordance with the NALC Constitution which requires the Nominating Committee to provide biographical information on the candidates 90 days prior to the Convocation. The biographical information was posted on the NALC website, published in the *NALC News* for May, and sent by e-mail to NALC congregations.

The responsibilities of the Nominating Committee are mostly clerical: to request nominations and then receive them; to request biographical information from the candidates and to provide it to NALC congregations and Convocation delegates.

The Nominating Committee also received nominations for the 2014 Nominating Committee and forwarded those names to the Executive Council for consideration. The Executive Council submits proposed members of the Nominating Committee for confirmation by the Convocation.

We were grateful to receive the names of so many well-qualified individuals for service to our church. God has blessed the NALC with many dedicated servants. Please pray that God will raise up the leaders who will best serve us at this time in the life of our church.

## **2013 NALC Nominating Committee**

- Pastor David Baer - Whitewood, S.D. (Chair)
- Richard Jansak - Hendersonville, N.C.
- Christopher Nevins - Fredericksburg, Texas
- Victor Stevens - North Ridgeville, Ohio
- Pastor Michael Tamorria - Rockford, Ohio

# Jon Evans

*Nominee for Court of Adjudication*

**Name:**

Jon E. Evans

**Address:**

Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania

**Congregation:**

Zion Lutheran Church  
Pittsburgh (Brentwood), Pa.

**Occupation:**

Attorney

**Please share some basic biographical information that will help us get to know you:**

First and foremost, I am a husband of almost 18 years to my wife, Donna Evans, who is also an active member of the NALC. We reside in the Upper St. Clair Township area of Pittsburgh and are very blessed to have three children, ages 16, 13 and 11. Our oldest child, Alice, was fortunate to be able to join Donna on the NALC's trip to Ethiopia during April 2012.

A native of the Columbus, Ohio, area, I graduated from Gahanna Lincoln High School and later, Capital University where I earned a Bachelor of Arts with a double major in Business Administration and Sociology. After working for several years in my family's plumbing and heating contracting business, I attended and obtained a Juris Doctor from the Duquesne University School of Law in Pittsburgh, Pa. I have since been practicing law for more than 20 years, primarily in the areas of corporate and real estate law. I am admitted as a member of the bar in both Pennsylvania and Ohio.

When time permits, I enjoy golf, travel, church activities, reading, and following our children's sporting endeavors.

**Experience within the Body of Christ that has prepared you for service in this position:**

2001-2002: Represented Zion Lutheran Church at the Southwestern Pennsylvania Synod Assembly.  
2004-2009: Served on the Zion Lutheran Church Council of Elders.

2005: Served as vice president of the Zion Lutheran Church Council of Elders and congregation.

2006-2007: Served two terms as president of the Zion Lutheran Church Council of Elders and congregation.

2010-Present: Assisted Zion Lutheran Church in the process of transferring membership from the ELCA to the NALC.

Serve as a current member of the NALC Court of Adjudication.

**What spiritual gifts and skills has God given you to bless this ministry?**

The Lord has blessed me with an ability to understand and be attentive to details. Also, He has blessed me with a love of people and a passion for the NALC's mission. I would look forward to the continuing opportunity to enthusiastically put these gifts to use in the furtherance of the Court of Adjudication's role and ministry within the church.

**What should be the NALC's most important ministry priorities over the next few years?**

What it always should be — making disciples in Christ, both internally and externally. God knows our hearts and gives us the ability to lead for His benefit. Our priorities need to be focused on making sure we are filling our hearts and minds with His love and reflecting that through not only our words, but our actions. In addition to furthering our initiatives as a Mission-Driven body of Christ, we need to focus on education of our members in the Word. It is the Word that not only sustains and directs us on a daily basis, but also what allows us to better understand how to be appropriate

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# Jeffray Greene

*Nominee for Court of Adjudication*

**Name:**

Rev. Dr. Jeffray S. Greene

**Address:**

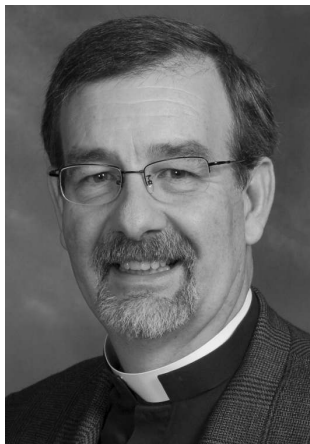
Rantoul, Illinois

**Congregation:**

American Lutheran Church  
Rantoul, Illinois

**Occupation:**

Pastor

**Please share some basic biographical information that will help us get to know you:**

Born and raised in California, after starting and running a business, I was called and ordained 23 years ago. After serving two congregations in Phoenix, Ariz., I served my first full-time parish in Tucson at Mt. Zion for seven years. I next served Emmanuel Lutheran in Brea, Calif., before accepting my current call at American Lutheran in Rantoul, Ill. My Ph.D. is in church administration and this has provided many opportunities to serve the greater church with both business and constitutional expertise. I have been married to Lorene (a BSN Registered Nurse and current FNP student) for almost 28 years and have three children: Rosalynne (married); Dane (currently in college) and my youngest, Alisa (who has spent the past year as an exchange student in Finland and will soon be returning to begin college). I have many hobbies, centered around the continued desire to learn and grow. I am an voracious reader and enjoy writing. It is a privilege to serve the Lord in whatever capacity He so chooses to call me.

**Experience within the Body of Christ that has prepared you for service in this position:**

My Ph.D. is in church administration and the dissertation for the Ph.D. was on the development of the constitution of the ELCA and predecessor bodies. A member of the Fellowship of

Confessional Lutherans (begun in 1990) and the last editor of its quarterly, working with WordAlone from the earliest days, then Solid Rock Lutherans in its work at the 2005 Churchwide Assembly, as well as a consulting member for the LCMC and NALC constitutions, I have been involved in working in and through administrative and judicial details for many years. I have served since the inception of the NALC on the Court of Adjudication.

**What spiritual gifts and skills has God given you to bless this ministry?**

The Lord has given me the ability to remember things. I remember details. I also have a deep understanding of history and those things which have developed over the years. Tying these together, I see things from a distant to present perspective and then project forward, allowing for all the variables that do come, to seek as clear a path as possible through current circumstances. These gifts have helped as I have served five different congregations, each with issues that needed to be resolved; working through them with an eye on the past, the present and the future into which they needed to go. These same gifts have been used in my involvement in what has culminated in the NALC.

**What should be the NALC's most important ministry priorities over the next few years?**

As we continue to answer the Lord's call for faithfulness in an increasingly unfaithful world, we should be diligent in our reliance upon the Lord's leading through His unchanging Word and the direction He has and is providing for us through the Holy Spirit. We should remain vigilant in making the four principles we declare as our directives truly a part of who we are, recognizing that good words are only words unless they are followed by action. By our fruits, we will declare that we are the people we declare ourselves to be. We have made a good start, but we need to be intentional to follow through so that we become what we hold before us as the goal.

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**What tangible actions can the NALC, its mission districts, and its member congregations take to live out our commitment to be a Mission-Driven church body?**

Through continued diligence to intentionally gather together, work together and plan together to be part of a greater church, we can become what the Lord is calling us to be. After years of indifference and isolation, it is time to be intentional about helping each congregation truly develop an understanding that we are called to be disciples and not just members, individually, congregationally and the church as a whole. I am thankful to be a part of a mission district whose heart is for mission and have taken joy in seeing the growing desire to reach out locally, regionally and globally.

**List a favorite Scripture verse and tell why it has meaning for you.**

Romans 8:28 and following is often the favorite to me as a high point in the Book of Romans. I am reminded that everything is in the Lord's hands and that it will work according to His purpose. Any storm or gale that comes He already knew about and His plan can never be thwarted. This reminds me to be still in the midst of uncertainty and be reminded that He is God. He's got the whole world in His hands. He always has and always will. He is always presenting challenges for which He already has the answers.

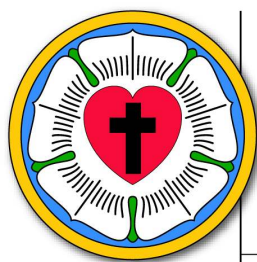
examples of God's love for others. In addition, we need to emphasize evangelistic outreach and education for youth, who are so bombarded with norms driven by popular culture and quite frankly, utter nonsense. A different and better voice must be heard!

**What tangible actions can the NALC, its mission districts, and its member congregations take to live out our commitment to be a Mission-Driven church body?**

1. Provide additional Biblical learning programs for its members.
2. Provide additional programming in the areas of youth and young family ministry.
3. Individually, each of us can do more to serve as examples of God's love to non-believers and those who believe differently. Be ready to answer when called upon and lead by actions when not. The NALC can continually work to remind us of that responsibility.

**List a favorite Scripture verse and tell why it has meaning for you.**

Luke 12:22-34: These verses provide great comfort and peace to me as I operate in our complex and anxiety-filled earthly world. I know that I am loved and where my unfailing treasures reside.



North American Lutheran Church

# Matthew Burkhart

*Nominee for Executive Council - Lay*

**Name:**

Matthew J. Burkhart

**Address:**

Columbus, Ohio

**Congregation:**

Upper Arlington Lutheran  
Columbus, Ohio

**Occupation:**

Attorney

**Please share some basic biographical information that will help us get to know you:***I am a Christian.*

When I was 5 years old, I knelt with my mom by our family room couch and asked Jesus to come into my heart. When I was 10, I found a rock on which “One God - Serve Him” was written. I took it as a not-so-subtle clue that the “faith of my father” must become my own; and it did. I am a life-long Lutheran and have been a member of Upper Arlington Lutheran Church my entire life. Having grown up singing hymns and liturgy, I grew to love those aspects of Lutheran worship and how they engage the mind. In addition, as a drummer for one of our church’s worship teams, I also crave the engagement of the heart that contemporary worship can offer.

*I am a husband.*

My wife, Karen, and I have been married for 12 years. Karen is Canadian (we met “online” long before it was cool) and has a background in the Assemblies of God church. Karen is a Christian songwriter, singer, and speaker, and we particularly enjoy ministering together.

*I am a father.*

Karen and I have two boys, Tyler (age 10) and Colson (age 7). They are active in all manner of little league sports and are excelling in school. Most importantly, they have both knelt and asked Jesus into their hearts.

**Experience within the Body of Christ that has prepared you for service in this position:**

I am ending a three-year term as a member of our church council. During that time, I was actively engaged in the issues facing our congregation and supported new ministry opportunities presented to our church. In addition, I worked hard as a member of two subcommittees: one that considered issues facing our church as we move toward the third decade of the 21st century; and another that was part of a church-wide effort to reignite our mission and vision. I would bring the same commitment and dedication to this appointment.

For 15 years, I have been a drummer with one of our “worship teams” serving every Sunday morning with other vocalists and instrumentalists. Our goal is to provide an environment, through music, that facilitates — with God’s help — an encounter with God through regular worship.

Over the years, I have also participated in a host of other ministries, including as a member of a team that conceived and began a men’s ministry and as a leader on multiple “Christ Renews His Parish” endeavors.

**What spiritual gifts and skills has God given you to bless this ministry?**

Faith — the spiritual gift of faith has been described as the “ability to envision what needs to be done and to trust God to accomplish it.” I am eager to use this gift as a member of the Executive Council as we envision our future together and determine the steps God would have us take together toward that future.

Leadership — the spiritual gift of leadership has been described as “having a clear, significant vision from God and be able to communicate it and influence others to pursue that vision.” It is a joy to sense God’s movement and then share the vision and bring others along to accomplish it together.

Discernment — the spiritual gift of discernment has been described as “the ability to quickly perceive

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whether things are from God.” God has used this gift in my life as a sensitivity to the leading of the Holy Spirit and understanding the truth of God’s Word.

### **What should be the NALC’s most important ministry priorities over the next few years?**

#### *Impact the World for Christ*

Of course, this must be central and the extent to which our churches are passionately attempting to impact the world for Christ bears a direct correlation to the health of the churches. In this day and age, church growth through conversion is both essential and (as always) commanded; without it, most churches will wither and die in our “post-Christian” culture where an active faith and moral code are no longer the “norm.”

#### *Engage More of Our Congregations*

Only a healthy congregation/denomination can be truly effective in impacting the world. Our faith must grow so that each of us is compelled to live by Christ’s example and act out accordingly — to live “dangerously” for Christ. We must train our members to live dangerously for Christ providing a grander vision beyond our local congregations and engaging culture in the battle to win souls.

### **What should be the NALC’s most important ministry priorities over the next few years?**

#### *The Great Commission — North America*

The NALC must undertake serious steps to grow its member churches through conversion. Local ministry support and resources are critical in these times as our churches no longer may simply rely on church membership drives, doctrine, and inside ministry programs to resupply its congregation with congregants. Instead, congregations must be so impassioned — so motivated by the truth that those without Christ have no real hope — that they live out the Great Commission in their daily lives. The NALC must lead with vision here and identify goals and training opportunities to assist in this effort.

#### *The Great Commission — World*

The NALC must (in the words of Henry Blackaby) find where God is already at work and join Him. Let’s scour ministry efforts around the world and join those that are effectively addressing both physical *and* spiritual conditions. We need not reinvent the wheel but could be a critical partner to come alongside other efforts that are bearing the very fruit we seek to cultivate.

### **List a favorite Scripture verse and tell why it has meaning for you.**

“So be strong and courageous! Do not be afraid and do not panic before [your enemies]. For the Lord your God will personally go ahead of you. He will neither fail nor abandon you.”

— Deuteronomy 31:6

I love verses with exclamation points! This passage has always heartened me and encouraged me to press on. The Lord goes before us if we would but follow Him. Even when the opposition seems overwhelming, if we are firmly trusting in God, we can proceed in strength and courage knowing we will not be abandoned. Amen!



# Richard Jansak

*Nominee for Executive Council - Lay*

**Name:**

Richard E. Jansak

**Address:**

Hendersonville, N.C.

**Congregation:**

Trinity Lutheran Church  
Fletcher, North Carolina

**Occupation:**

Retired

**Please share some basic biographical information that will help us get to know you:**

I retired from Steelcase Corporation in Grand Rapids, Mich. My position within Steelcase was Director of Product Development. I live in Hendersonville with my wife, Linda. She also retired from Steelcase as Manager of International Marketing. We have six daughters pretty much spread over the United States. Along with the daughters we have 11 grandchildren.

My undergraduate degree is in Electrical Engineering, and I have a Masters in Business Administration. I found this combination to be particularly effective within today's corporations. I have a pilot's license with instrument and instructor privileges. With a good friend we own a Cessna 182 which we try to fly at least once a week. My wife Linda enjoys flying, and we have visited family a number of times using the airplane. I am active in the financial markets and manage our own retirement portfolio.

**Experience within the Body of Christ that has prepared you for service in this position:**

With a minor exception I have been a Lutheran all of my life. I have served within the churches that I have belonged to in a number of capacities: Sunday school teacher, Sunday school administrator, 25-year celebration chairperson,

council member and council president several times and, most recently, individual in charge of Trinity's long-range planning effort. Trinity is an NALC mission church located in Fletcher, N.C. I was elected as its first council president. During our first year we organized all functions necessary for proper worship, selected a call committee and called our first pastor.

**What spiritual gifts and skills has God given you to bless this ministry?**

Over the years I believe I have grown in the area of patience, my ability to listen and solicit ideas in a team environment and to organize complex activities into manageable sub-tasks. Working with volunteers within a church situation is much different than working with employees in industry. To be effective one must develop people skills and sensitivities that are closer to a family (a church family) environment. Praying and listening for God's guidance is essential; this I have also learned!

**What should be the NALC's most important ministry priorities over the next few years?**

I happen to have some very strong feelings about this and have communicated these feelings personally to NALC leadership. The NALC must, I believe, create a clear identity for itself in order to secure a leadership role within Lutheranism. Being part of a mission church we constantly pray and listen to God's plan for Trinity, especially as that plan relates to the Great Commission and our goal of obtaining financial stability. In my opinion we must continue to distinguish ourselves from other Lutheran denominations, especially LCMS and ELCA. Whether this is accomplished on a national level or a district level, unless we do, our purpose and growth as a denomination will be limited.

In addition, since so many of our pastors will be retiring in the next few years, we must find ways of encouraging young people to accept Jesus as their Savior and accept a ministerial call. Nothing else will matter if we do not have shepherds for our flocks!

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# Paul O'Malley

*Nominee for Executive Council - Lay*

**Name:**

Paul W. O'Malley

**Address:**

Fort Wayne, Indiana

**Congregation:**

St. Mark's Lutheran Church  
Auburn, Indiana

**Occupation:**

Patent Attorney

**Please share some basic biographical information that will help us get to know you:**

Born in 1955 in Detroit, Mich., and grew up in Marion, Ind., and Fort Wayne, Ind. I hold a B.S. in Electrical Engineering from Northwestern University and a J.D. from Valparaiso University. I am admitted to the practice of law in Illinois and Indiana and have spent most of my 31 years in practice working as a patent attorney. I am a former chairman of the Fort Wayne Section of the IEEE. I am married to Susan Firestone with whom I have three children, Mark, Peter and Tatiana. My hobbies include the planetary sciences, fencing and bicycling.

**Experience within the Body of Christ that has prepared you for service in this position:**

I have been a member of Lutheran congregations which range in locale from small town to major city. My activities with these various communities have included worship support including singing with the choir, ushering and serving as an assisting minister. I have served on church councils, call committees and bylaw committees. I also sang with the Schola Cantorum of Concordia Theological Seminary in Fort Wayne for several years. I have supported congregational schools at Zion and St. Paul's Lutheran Churches in Fort Wayne.

**What spiritual gifts and skills has God given you to bless this ministry?**

I prefer to work behind the scenes to support others in their jobs. I think of myself as someone with a

good strategic sense and as being strongly analytical. I like to understand the details of an issue before taking a position. I enjoy teaching (or perhaps better expressed, tutoring) and have an engineer's distaste for inefficiency.

**What should be the NALC's most important ministry priorities over the next few years?**

Congregations need assurance that their needs for sound pastoral leadership will be met now and in the long term. The NALC should also provide sound teaching documents and theological guidance for congregations. I believe the NALC should strive to assure that the NALC does not become isolated and should continue its direct church-to-church contacts with other bodies, particularly Lutheran church bodies such as the LCMS.

**What tangible actions can the NALC, its mission districts, and its member congregations take to live out our commitment to be a Mission-Driven church body?**

To some extent each congregation's situation is unique to it. That does not mean that congregations cannot learn from each other. Districts can foster meetings between congregations which focus on learning over business. Congregations with successful mission efforts can be encouraged to develop case studies which can be distributed. Such studies may primarily be audio-visual works supported by the central church body. In considering the work of the church though we should always be mindful of the danger of becoming "a respectable, self-indulgent, self-satisfied religious celebration."

**List a favorite Scripture verse and tell why it has meaning for you.**

"Jesus looked at him and loved him. 'One thing you lack,' he said. 'Go sell everything you have and give to the poor and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me.'" — Mark 10:21

I recall this verse when I feel the urge to "play it safe" when I recall that the rich man Jesus spoke to "went away sad for he had many possessions." I think I know what the man felt, and it was fear at setting out on a new path even when the path was God's intention for him.



# Frank Polkowski

*Nominee for Executive Council - Lay*

**Name:**

Frank Polkowski

**Address:**

East Amherst, New York

**Congregation:**

Zion Lutheran Church  
Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania

**Occupation:**

Organizational and  
Professional Business Coach,  
Consultant, Motivational Speaker

**Please share some basic biographical information that will help us get to know you:**

Frank and Juhree have been married 45 years, have two married sons and six wonderful grandchildren. They have lived in numerous cities across the U.S. having worked 25 years for IBM Corporation in various management, leadership, and organizational development positions.

Upon retiring from corporate America, Frank formed the NonProfit Management Center in Buffalo, N.Y., to apply his board, committee, leadership, management, facilitation, and human resource experience in counseling numerous nonprofit and for-profit organizations across North America. He held leadership positions within numerous congregations across the U.S. and synod leadership positions within the ELCA (Lutheran Charities, Lake Chautauqua Lutheran Center). He led a major (\$2.5 million) congregational capital building campaign without outside debt. Frank has guided numerous strategic planning task force operations to positive conclusion. Counseled numerous nonprofit agencies, organizations, and corporations in setting their goals, meeting their needs, and providing guidance as needed.

**Experience within the Body of Christ that has prepared you for service in this position:**

- + Member of Zion Lutheran Church, Pittsburgh, Pa.
- + NALC Candidacy Committee Member (2011-2013).
- + Co-founder, Christ Lutheran Church, East Amherst, N.Y. (NALC, 2011).
- + Lutheran CORE Member attending 2010 Convocation and voted for NALC ratification.
- + Attended 2011 & 2012 NALC Convocations as NALC member.
- + President, Zion Lutheran Church, Clarence Center, N.Y. (5 years).
- + Various Council, committee, and volunteer positions, Zion Lutheran Church (24 years).
- + Orchestrated a major church expansion involving finance, building needs, and outreach.
- + Human resources, Zion, counseled pastors in leadership issues (18 years).
- + Vice President, Lake Chautauqua Lutheran Center (6 years).
- + Board of Directors, Lutheran Charities (2 years).
- + Council & volunteer positions, St Paul's Lutheran, Carlisle, Pa. (3 years).
- + Council and volunteer positions, Lutheran Church of the Resurrection, Canoga Park, Calif. (6 years).
- + Taught communication skills, Lutheran leaders, Lutheran conference, Western New York.
- + Taught presentation skills, Knights of Columbus world-wide leadership.
- + Taught presentation skills, Baptist ministers, western New York.
- + Taught Sunday church school, 20-plus years.

**What spiritual gifts and skills has God given you to bless this ministry?**

I have been given the gifts of communication, humor, creativity, sensitivity, and leadership. I have been blessed with the ability to powerfully speak to all size audiences on numerous topics.

Using my broad human resource, management, and organizational background, I can be used to inspire and guide others within NALC, mission districts, and local congregations as needed for the benefit of the whole organization. The Lord has put a passion on my heart for NALC and missions.

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# Frank Polkowski

*Continued from Page 30*

## **What should be the NALC's most important ministry priorities over the next few years?**

I believe our most important ministry priorities should focus on being a source of guidance for our congregations, as well as being a support for those who are struggling with the decision to become a NALC congregation.

We need to maintain our high standard for developing and approving those in ministry while securing educational alliances that meet the basic premises of Lutheran doctrine.

We need to continue our mission outreach for those who are unchurched at home and globally by encouraging our members to be Christ's disciples.

## **What tangible actions can the NALC, its mission districts, and its member congregations take to live out our commitment to be a Mission-Driven church body?**

We need to better publicize mission building opportunities, events, retreats, and success stories using our national website as an "information central" resource. Although districts and congregations are hosting local programs, increasing visibility would allow others outside of the local geography the opportunity to both share and learn from each other. This would also build camaraderie across the continent.

Establish a mission contact within each mission district and congregation to speed and focus communication and develop mission projects.

## **List a favorite Scripture verse and tell why it has meaning for you.**

Psalm 23. Many times I am placed in difficult counseling, coaching, and leadership situations. This Psalm helps me keep my focus, gives me quiet support, and assurance in His strength.

# Richard Jansak

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## **What tangible actions can the NALC, its mission districts, and its member congregations take to live out our commitment to be a Mission-Driven church body?**

Liberal theology and popular cultural themes are moving churches away from God's Word — seemingly, on a daily basis. Within my previous Lutheran church we enrolled in a Bible study program developed by the Methodist church called Disciple Bible Study. The program was relatively intense: 2½ hours classroom and at least 1 hour per day home study. That program and what we (my wife and I) learned played a major role in our decision to leave the ELCA. It emphasized over and over again the consequences of ignoring God's Word. We should live and act as Jesus would like, but we must bring God's Word before today's people. Frankly, as a mission church, Trinity prays and struggles with this issue daily without, so far, a major success. However, all things are possible with God and that's what we depend on!

## **List a favorite Scripture verse and tell why it has meaning for you.**

"For I know the plans I have for you," declares the Lord, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future."

— Jeremiah 29:11

During times of personal trouble, and during times where I have been privileged to counsel someone, I have found these words from our God particularly comforting. They say that, in spite of the way things look at the moment, God's plan is for good and all we need to do is trust in Him.

# Bassam Abdallah

*Nominee for Executive Council - Clergy*

**Name:**

Rev. Dr. Bassam J. Abdallah

**Address:**

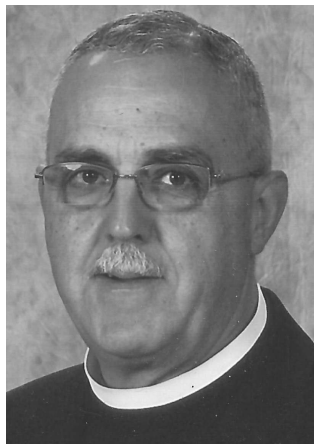
Hammond, Indiana

**Congregation:**

First United Lutheran Church  
Hammond, Indiana

**Occupation:**

Pastor

**Please share some basic biographical information that will help us get to know you:**

I was born in Jerusalem's Old City in 1950. I spent four of my teen years in a monastery. I attended Lutheran and Anglican schools. Upon immigrating to the U.S., I attended the NCAA's University of Champions, the University of Louisville. LSTC was the seminary I graduated from. I was called to Redeemer Lutheran Church, Bryant, Indiana, and was ordained in February 1977. That same year, Katy and I were married. We were blessed with one son, Joseph. I attended the United Theological Seminary and the California Graduate School of Theology. I served Redeemer for 13 years and have been at First United since 1989. Katy is a Chicago Public School teacher. Joseph is married with two children.

**Experience within the Body of Christ that has prepared you for service in this position:**

I was very active in immigrant and relocation ministries — sponsoring refugees from the Far East, Iraq, Palestine, and the former Soviet Union. Katy and I sponsored over 30 students from the Middle East and Ethiopia to study in the U.S. Also, I was active in migrant ministry, provided migrant workers with babysitting sites and activities for their children while working. After the formation of the ELCA, I started six Arabic-speaking and one Armenian congregations. In 1992 I became the ELCA's consultant on Arab and Middle Eastern Ministries.

**What spiritual gifts and skills has God given you to bless this ministry?**

The Lord has blessed me in so many and different ways. My greatest passion are the poor and the Christians who suffer in Muslim countries. I appointed myself as the Lutheran spokesman who advocates for Christians in the Middle East and the Muslim world. I am well versed in Islam and Muslim teachings which allow me to challenge and motivate Christians. Since I was born and grew up poor, I not only sympathize with them, but the Lord blessed me in finding ways to alleviate their suffering. First United has ministries to the poor and needy every month of every year, from collecting socks for the homeless and mittens for local children, to making lap robes for dialysis patients at renal centers around the world and purchasing nets to fight Malaria.

**What should be the NALC's most important ministry priorities over the next few years?**

The NALC should venture into three areas:

1. New congregations. Lutherans in the U.S. are pleading for a Lutheran body that is Christ-Centered, Mission-Driven, Traditionally-Grounded, and Congregationally-Focused. We need to reach these people with serious and aggressive congregational starts.
2. International partnerships. The NALC could stand alone in being the bridge that brings churches of the developing world to share in the resources of the U.S., the partnership that others denied them, and love that binds the Body of Christ.
3. The suffering Christians are forgotten and/or ignored in the U.S., for political reasons. The NALC could become the voice advocating on their behalf.

**What tangible actions can the NALC, its mission districts, and its member congregations take to live out our commitment to be a Mission-Driven church body?**

1. Partnership in mission starts — and be very intentional in reaching the ethnic communities.

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# Bassam Abdallah

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2. Partnership with the suffering global church: direct assistance, mission trips, sharing resources, etc.

3. Be the welcoming home to all, especially at the current junction of U.S. Lutheranism.

4. Established congregations can share their space and resources with ethnic congregations or begin ethnic mission initiatives.

**List a favorite Scripture verse and tell why it has meaning for you.**

“Come to me, all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me; for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.” — Matthew 11:28-30

These verses sum up my life’s journey: an Arab Christian growing up in a predominantly Muslim Jerusalem, an immigrant in the United States, a Lutheran pastor in a church that was convinced that all Arabs are Muslims, and an advocate for the suffering body of Christ. I realized at a very early age in my life, that the weariness of my ethnicity and the inhospitable Lutherans (ELCA) could become very manageable and a source of strength and resolve with Jesus as the full partner of my life’s journey.



# Cathi Braasch

*Nominee for Executive Council - Clergy*

**Name:**

Rev. Dr. Cathi Braasch

**Address:**

Elwood, Nebraska

**Congregation:**

Trinity Lutheran Church  
Gothenburg, Nebraska

**Occupation:**

Pastor  
Intentional Interim and  
Transitional Ministry Specialist (currently interim  
senior pastor of Peace Lutheran Church, St.  
Joseph Mich.)



**Please share some basic biographical information that will help us get to know you:**

I’m writing this on the anniversary of a service that changed my life forever – my baptism into Christ, at age 18, on Sunday, April 16, 1967. On that day, if anyone would have told me where my faith journey would lead, I’d have just laughed! Yet, since then, the call and gifts of God have led where I’d have never imagined.

As a fifth-generation Mormon 8-year-old who wandered into a neighborhood Lutheran Vacation Bible School, and later as a young adult convert to Christianity, I was grasped by the undeserved, unearnable grace and mercy of Jesus. Through his people, Jesus loved me as He found me and loved me too much to leave me in that condition. I’ve been blessed by marriage to my loving husband, Red, now going on 47 years. We’re parents of a fine Christian daughter and son-in-law. Our family church life has centered on mission in rural communities, and this shaped my sense of call to full-time ministry as a second career. Opportunities to serve in church leadership complemented my secular career in public relations, marketing, organizational development and volunteer program management. A love of the Lord, mission and lifelong learning led to graduate study: M.A. in

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## **Continued from Page 33**

Organizational Leadership (thesis on exemplary mission leadership in mission congregations); Master of Divinity (thesis on confessional witness to an emerging world religion, the Mormon church), and the Doctor of Ministry focusing on spiritual formation and direction. Now retired from settled parish ministry, I'm serving my third full-time interim while researching best practices in interim/transitional ministry for the NALC. I go where I'm needed, address issues that inhibit the congregation's spiritual life and mission growth, and shepherd them into the future our Lord is preparing for them.

I'm grateful for a life that's led me *God* knows where, to do and be *God* knows what.

### **Experience within the Body of Christ that has prepared you for service in this position:**

- + Currently: Member, Sola Publishing Board of Directors.
- + 2012 and 2013: Planner and leader for NALC Seminarians' annual retreat.
- + 2010-2012: Provisional Dean, Nebraska NALC, and consultant to congregations who were making transitions into the NALC and/or Lutheran Congregations in Mission for Christ (LCMC).
- + 2009-2010: Member, Lutheran CORE Vision and Planning Group, which developed overall design and coordinated work with several other task groups in forming the NALC.
- + Since 2002: full-time parish pastor; first as solo pastor for 9 years in a large rural congregation in Nebraska; currently serving my third intentional interim ministry in the NALC. Participant in the Fund for Theological Education's ecumenical "Calling Congregations" initiative and related national consultations. Served on several synod task forces and committees, such as Bishop's consultation committee, rural ministry, stewardship, communications, Parish Ministry Associate steering committee, before leaving ELCA in early 2010 for Biblical and theological reasons.
- + 1997-2002: Women of the ELCA (executive director).
- + 1988-1997: ELCA Division for Outreach (mission director, rural ministry and synodical relations

director, director for leadership in outreach ministries).

+ 1974-1987: congregational leader (president, vice-president, financial secretary, council member; chair of stewardship, constitutional revision; adult and youth Bible teacher, youth group leader.)

+ 1974-1987: several volunteer leadership roles in synod/district/regional Lutheran bodies (LC-MS, LCA & ELCA), including convener, Eastern Washington-Idaho Synod Planning Group.

### **What spiritual gifts and skills has God given you to bless this ministry?**

+ *Faith and Prayer* – Faith is that Holy Spirit-given capacity to believe the promises of God, as revealed in Jesus Christ through Word and Sacraments. Prayer keeps me centered on Christ and others. As an executive council member, I'd continue to focus on faith and prayer as foundations for servant-leadership.

+ *Proclamation and Prophecy* – Relating God's Word to ordinary life and extraordinary circumstances, for laity and clergy in rural, urban, suburban, cross-cultural, ecumenical and inter-faith contexts.)

+ *Wisdom and Experience in Governance* – Extensive knowledge and experience in focusing large-scale organizations, both church and secular, on envisioning, planning and evaluating their work.

+ *Administration* – Nearly four decades of practical, progressively responsible experience in team-focused executive and program management, for both church and secular organizations.

+ *Teaching* – Recognize and take advantage of teachable moments and learning opportunities that present themselves to organizations, their leaders and constituents.

### **What should be the NALC's most important ministry priorities over the next few years?**

The overall priority must be to make Christ known in an age when indifference and hostility to Christ are increasing. Our core values — Christ-centered, Mission-driven, Traditionally-grounded and Congregationally-focused — must guide all our actions. With these in mind, I envision the NALC focusing on:

**Continued on Page 35**

+ *Grounding*: Focus on every congregation being a center for Christian spiritual formation and discipleship at all ages and stages of life, giving first-order attention to Biblical and Confessional literacy, worship and prayer life, discipleship training, and stewardship of gifts, skills and resources.

+ *Going*: Form and strengthen strategic mission alliances with like-minded church bodies in North America and elsewhere, in order to sustain and increase the biblical witness to growing secularization and other world religions.

+ *Generating*: Identify, develop and implement the best available principles, knowledge and practices in evangelization, discipleship and ministry leadership development. Focus on providing readily accessible, reliable information and referral services. Avoid unnecessary duplication of ministry programs and services.

+ *Growing*: Prepare for sustainable growth, including a potential doubling or tripling of the number of NALC member congregations in next 5-10 years, while maintaining a lean, cost-effective organizational structure.

### **What tangible actions can the NALC, its mission districts, and its member congregations take to live out our commitment to be a Mission-Driven church body?**

1. Assure that NALC congregations will continue to have Biblically and Confessionally faithful, energetic, mission-driven pastors, educators and other church workers into the future by:

+ Fostering a “culture of call” that intentionally and systematically invites adults and young people to say “yes” to serving in parish ministry, para-ministry organizations and educational institutions.

+ Developing and supporting ministry formation approaches that are accessible and affordable without sacrificing Biblical, theological and practical integrity.

+ Creating and maintaining information and referral networks so that every congregation and leader has prompt access to best available knowledge, practices and peer consultation in mission and ministry.

2. Address the reality that most NALC congregations are going through at least one major transition — the transition from one church body into another.

+ Recognize how issues affecting congregational vitality do not just go away by changing denominations.

+ Equip congregational leaders and mission district deans to identify congregational strengths and weaknesses, and to respond appropriately to early signs of ministry opportunities and threats.

+ Provide timely, accessible, affordable assistance, such as a corps of interim pastors and transition consultants, to help congregations re-focus on the mission future our Lord is preparing for them.

### **List a favorite Scripture verse and tell why it has meaning for you.**

I’m drawn to a group of four readings, such as we’d find in a lectionary. My favorite four include:

+ Habakkuk 2:2-4: After a lengthy lament, Habakkuk hears the Lord’s words of encouragement and instruction. Write the vision boldly. Wait for it, it will come, in God’s time. And remember: the righteous will live by faith.

+ Psalm 37, especially verses 5-6: The psalm mirrors the reading from Habakkuk, especially about steadfastness in the face of opposition. “Commit your way to the Lord; trust in Him and He will act” (v. 5). In the end, as a paraphrase puts it, others will know you were right for the Lord’s sake.

+ Philippians 2:5-11: This ancient Christ-hymn shows God’s missionary people the heart-and-mindset we are to have as leading servers and serving leaders. Have the mind of Christ among you, in order that, “at the name of Jesus, every knee shall bow and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.”

+ John 3:26-30: “Christ must increase, I must decrease.” John the Baptizer’s words remind all disciples that it’s all about Jesus, not us. For leading servers and serving leaders in Christ’s Church, there’s no room for envy, pride or self-promotion. If Christ is not increased as a result of what we proclaim, profess and practice, then we’ve missed the point of the cross and our ministry is in vain, or even worse, fatally misleading.



# Phillip Gagnon

## *Nominee for Executive Council - Clergy*

**Name:**

Rev. Phillip Edmond Gagnon

**Address:**

St. Albert, Alberta

**Congregation:**

St. Albert Evangelical Lutheran  
St. Albert, Alberta

**Occupation:**

Pastor

**Please share some basic biographical information that will help us get to know you:**

I am married to a wonderful, beautiful and patient woman whose name is Patricia for over 28 years (married August 31, 1985). Together we have three great kids Elise (24), Elias (21) and Sophie (19). My oldest, Elise, is married and lives in Vancouver attending the Arts Institute studying to be a chef while Elias and Sophie are at home working and going to university college or technical institute studying radiology and mechanical engineering. I studied at the University of Alberta and finished my B.A. in social sciences at The King's College in Edmonton, Alberta. I went to Saskatoon to Lutheran Theological Seminary in the ELCIC between 1993-1997 and took my first call in Viking, Alberta, at Golden Valley Lutheran Church in 1997. My second call in September 2002 was to St. Albert Evangelical Lutheran in which I am presently still serving.

**Experience within the Body of Christ that has prepared you for service in this position:**

During my time at The King's College I formed a counter-cult ministry "Christian Challenge Ministries" which worked hand-in-hand with Christian Research Institute-Canada for three years. In that time together we developed a newsletter and had 36 pastors, past members of other groups such as Cult Awareness Network and Council on Mind Abuse, and university professors working together in teaching seminars, counselling

families and ex-group members. From 1989 through to 1993 until going to seminary, I taught a number of seminars on New Religious Groups (cults) and did so throughout western Canada, in Los Angeles and Pasadena, Calif., and as far away as Seoul, South Korea (Nov. 1992) where I was told I was the first westerner to have been invited to do so.

I was also chair of the Confessional Lutheran Fellowship which was begun by Dr. Arnold Hagen and Dr. George Evenson and passed onto the Rev. Karl Johnsen and myself to head up. Later Pastor Johnsen and I, with a number of others, formed the Confessional Ministerium which I chaired for three years.

In my first call I began networking with other congregations (and denominations) to create what we called M2M (Mission 2 Mexico). We began with 18 people working together with nine congregations, feeding 500 in a campo and proclaiming the gospel in VBS with local ministry. Six years ago M2M morphed into M2M (Moved to Missions) which has six congregations officially joining the charitable group we formed. To date we have built 40 homes, fed over 50,000 people, sponsored 100 children for over 13 years. In 2003 I started an inner city ministry at St. Albert called Hosea Ministries (Hosea 14:4). We began with a budget of \$1,200/year and five people helping the homeless and sex workers in alleviating hunger, walking beside them in love, prayer and facilitating help with other agencies. This year our budget was \$50,000, and we have 20-24 people helping in preparation and five on the street.

Recently Rev. Karl Johnsen and I started planning theological conferences in response to the spread of revisionist theology and activism with the ELCIC. In 2005 we held our first, "What's At Stake" with 280 in attendance at St. Joseph's Basilica, Edmonton, and had notable scholars such as Dr. Robert Gagnon, Father Raymond De Souza, Rev. Dr. Amy Schiffrin, Rev. Philip Max Johnson and Rev. Dawn MacDonald. In 2010 we held our second "The Courage to be Lutheran" (Edmonton) with 200 in attendance with Dr. Carl Braaten and Dr. Robert Benne. Most recently we held our first

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Canadian Rockies Theological Conference with Dr. James Nestigen and Dr. Nathan Yoder in Canmore, Alberta. Being our first we had 70 attend. This year at our second CRTC with Dr. Carl Braaten and Dr. Robert Jenson (through teleconference) we had 99 attend and had “good theology, good fellowship and good libations.”

I published a book on exorcism from a Lutheran catholic perspective entitled *Deliver Us From Evil* which has been well received. At this conference I was asked by Bishop Bradosky to be the provisional dean for the Canada Section of the NALC.

### **What spiritual gifts and skills has God given you to bless this ministry?**

I believe that my personal experiences with cults prior to affirming my baptism has prepared me well in the area of incarnational apologetics in terms of meeting the challenges to our faith in Christ both intellectually and relationally. I enjoy meeting with people and seeking the grace of God in our lives together. While sin in the world can bring us down, I believe and strive to see the good that God has lavished upon us in His Son throughout our lives and creation. I have been told, and think it to be true, that I have a sense of the bovine scatology that is often found in suspect spiritualities and groups and so am often sought out to help in certain situations. I am a big-picture thinker, but I can also organize well, as evidenced by the largest group for missions I organized and led in 2005 in Mexico where we had 124 people working together and travelling down by plane and vehicles. I am a good moderator of conflict and seek a common good while striving to acknowledge accountability and responsibility truthfully and in forgiveness — we are, after all as Luther said, “all beggars.”

### **What should be the NALC’s most important ministry priorities over the next few years?**

I believe that we must define who we are and what we are for, which I think the NALC is well in process of doing. I think it will take some years for the NALC to gel together as a new, mature communion of faith. As such, we must continue to seek out those

who are hurting and bring the good news of a communion of faith that is defined and built up in Christ by the power of the Holy Spirit. Our greatest challenge will be to seek out and bring in those seeking such a body and defining ourselves not by what we are against, but what we are for. Structural lines of communication need to be clear and maintained well in order to have the ability to respond to needs articulated by the body and those seeking answers. The NALC is doing well in these areas, but we will be doing so for some time. We also need to continue networking with those communions who are of like mind and heart for Christ while not losing ourselves in the process of a true ecumenism.

### **What tangible actions can the NALC, its mission districts, and its member congregations take to live out our commitment to be a Mission-Driven church body?**

I think we should first heal ourselves as we seek out ways to deliver the message of the Gospel. Many congregations are still reeling from the battles of the past years. That being said, one of the best ways we can heal is to look forward to God’s promises in Christ and move forward in ministry. Networking with congregations in prayer and joint ministry opportunities brings hope though shared goals and resources. It says, “You’re not alone in this” and that it’s about us doing the work of the Gospel together, not only one congregation doing anything alone. Consequently, reaching out to each other, finding out what we can do together for the Kingdom of God, and hearing and supporting each other’s visions of ministry binds us together and makes us stronger in what the Holy Spirit will and is calling us to.

### **List a favorite Scripture verse and tell why it has meaning for you.**

My favorite verse is Philippians 1:6. This verse reminds me it is all about His grace, love and mercy. He knows my idiocies and weaknesses, my sin. Paul reminds me that God knew me before I was even born and that He is the one who began and will finish His work in me. He is the one faithful when I fall and He is the one who lifts me up from the dust of my sin, and for that mercy and love I am most grateful and in awe.

# John Hopper

*Nominee for Executive Council - Clergy*

**Name:**

Rev. Dr. John D. Hopper

**Address:**

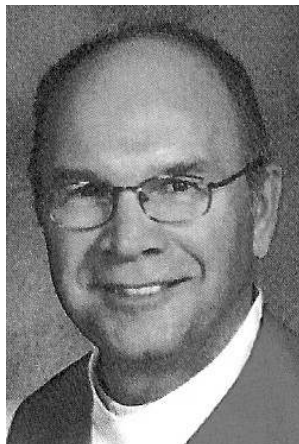
Hot Springs, South Dakota

**Congregation:**

Christ the King Lutheran  
Newcastle, Wyoming

**Occupation:**

Pastor



**Please share some basic biographical information that will help us get to know you:**

*Family:* Married to Sally for 47 years; children: son Michael (DeAnn) and grandchildren Lauren (13), Mikayla (11), and special granddaughter Katelyn (9-Down Syndrome); daughter Jennifer McKibben; daughter Sarah (Greg) Thorstad and grandchildren Marshall (6) and Nolan (2).

*Education:* Phillips Exeter Academy, Exeter, N.H. - 1964 (high school); Augsburg College, Minneapolis, Minn. - 1968 (B.A. in Philosophy); Luther Northwestern Seminary, St. Paul, Minn. - 1974 (M.Div.); Luther Seminary, St. Paul, Minn. - 1992 (D.Min.).

*Professional:* Ordained November 25, 1973, at Zion Lutheran Church, Fergus Falls, Minn. Pastor: 1973-1978 at Our Savior's Lutheran, Hermosa, S.D. and St. John's Lutheran, Hot Springs, S.D. 1978-1981 at Atonement Lutheran, St. Cloud, Minn. 1981-1992 at Trinity Lutheran, Westbrook, Minn. 1992-2003 at Opdal Lutheran and Our Savior's Lutheran, Sacred Heart, Minn. 2004-present at Christ the King Lutheran, Newcastle, Wyo.

*Author:* *Baptized: Marked for Living: A Lent-Easter Reflection*, 1996, and Adult Bible Studies on all four Gospels - taught in the congregations I served.

**Experience within the Body of Christ that has prepared you for service in this position:**

Though I have served in a variety of positions at the synodical level in ALC and ELCA, I believe my experience within the worshiping community of faith has nurtured me well.

**What spiritual gifts and skills has God given you to bless this ministry?**

I have been blessed with a variety of gifts for serving in the parish setting, and I have been blessed to be able to use them as a pastor for the past almost forty years. Those gifts are preaching, teaching, administering the sacraments and equipping the saints. Yes, I am blessed to serve in parishes where I am able to live out my call as a parish pastor. It is my first love.

Because my heart is in parish ministry, I believe God can and will use me to serve the NALC on the Executive Council. I have been told that I am a strong spiritual leader. My commitment to the Scriptures is basic to my work. As a Biblical preacher and teacher, God has used me to help others to grow in their faith. For that I am always thankful.

**What should be the NALC's most important ministry priorities over the next few years?**

We are called to be faithful in our calling as a Confessional Lutheran church. The NALC has made a great beginning! As we look into our future I believe God will use our "new voice" to challenge and inspire others to uphold the scriptures as God's true Word for the world so desperately in need of a Word of hope and love. May God give us courage to stay the path placed before us in this critical time.

**What should be the NALC's more important ministry priorities over the next few years?**

Be faithful to the Gospel. That is what God calls us to be and do for it is only in the proclamation of the Gospel of Jesus Christ that there is life and salvation. It is a tangible act. Many of us have come

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# John Hopper

*Continued from Page 38*

out of a church body that has not been faithful to the Word of God. And my heart aches for them.

Pray for God's Kingdom among us. Prayer is a tangible act that gives life and hope to God's people. I have said often to the members of Christ the King where I now serve as pastor that a church that is immersed in the Word and prays is doing what God has called us to be and do. And God will bless our ministry.

**List a favorite Scripture verse and tell why it has meaning for you.**

2 Corinthians 12:7b-10. Paul talks about his "thorn in the flesh" and how his "healing" comes from God's all-sufficient grace. And then he says: *"...for whenever I am weak, then I am strong."*

I have lived more than forty years with Crohn's Disease, had four cancer surgeries, and lived with chronic pain, *but* I am healed! I am thankful that God's grace has sustained me and strengthened me for service among his people. I am a better person and pastor because God has used my personal suffering to bring strength to others. It is only God's grace that makes the Church of Christ strong and alive! May God continue a good work begun in the NALC and bring it to fruition. Thanks be to God!



# Eddy Perez

*Nominee for Executive Council - Clergy*

**Name:**

Rev. Dr. Eddy F. Perez

**Address:**

Miami, Florida

**Congregation:**

Iglesia Luterana San Pedro  
Miami, Florida

**Occupation:**

Pastor



**Please share some basic biographical information that will help us get to know you:**

Pastor Eddy Perez, a former medical doctor who felt the calling of God in 1992, began his ministry in central Cuba as a pastor-developer. Over the course of seven years, God used him to plant two churches. Pastor Perez and his family eventually faced persecution at the hands of the Cuban government until, in the year 2000, harassment by the Cuban State Security Police Department was so intense, the Perez Family had to flee Cuba and come to the USA.

Upon his arrival, Pastor Perez and his family became members of Principe de Paz Lutheran Church, Miami, where he was later ordained into the Ministry of Word and Sacrament. He subsequently served two congregations: Messiah Lutheran Church and Iglesia Luterana San Pedro (where he currently serves), both in Miami, Florida.

Pastor Perez is known for his uncompromising commitment to the truth of Scripture. For many years, he has been a prophetic voice against the movements that caused the ELCA to depart from the Word of God. In June 2009, he led many of the Hispanic pastors of Florida to write a public letter to the voting members of the ELCA 2009 Churchwide Assembly asking them to cast their votes based on fidelity to Scripture; and, after the vote, Pastor Perez led most of the Hispanic pastors of the

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Florida Bahamas Synod to write a public repudiation of the new ministry policies and Social Statement.

After the 2009 Lutheran CORE Convocation in Fishers, Ind., Pastor Perez served as an advisor on the Lutheran CORE Steering Committee involved with Hispanic Ministries and ecumenical outreach to ELCA clergy in the United States and Caribbean. In 2010 he was elected to the Lutheran CORE Steering Committee, and reelected for a second term in 2012. Pastor Perez is also the NALC Dean for the Caribbean and Hispanic Ministry Mission District.

### **Experience within the Body of Christ that has prepared you for service in this position:**

+ I began my ministry in Cuba as a pastor-developer. Over the course of seven years, God used my gifts to plant two churches in central Cuba.

+ Since my ordination in 2005, I have served two congregations in the Miami area: Messiah Lutheran Church and Iglesia Luterana San Pedro.

+ After the 2009 Lutheran CORE Convocation in Fishers, Ind., I served as an advisor on the Lutheran CORE Steering Committee involved with Hispanic ministries and ecumenical outreach to ELCA clergy in the United States and Caribbean. In 2010 I was elected to the Lutheran CORE Steering Committee and reelected for a second term in 2012. I am also the NALC Dean for the Caribbean and Hispanic Ministry Mission District.

### **What spiritual gifts and skills has God given you to bless this ministry?**

+ My passion is to share the message of Jesus Christ with others.

+ I am on a mission to make disciples.

+ I have learned to set priorities.

+ I love working with other pastors and leaders.

## **What should be the NALC's most important ministry priorities over the next few years?**

+ Sharing Jesus Christ with others.

+ Training and encouraging our pastors, leaders, and laity, to become disciples instead of members.

+ Reaching out to Hispanic, Asian, African, and African-American Communities.

+ Finding ways to provide a solid theological education for our pastoral candidates.

### **What tangible actions can the NALC, its mission districts, and its member congregations take to live out our commitment to be a Mission-Driven church body?**

+ We must educate our congregations, leaders, and pastors on the importance of sharing Jesus Christ with others.

+ We must continue encouraging our pastors, leaders, and congregations to become disciples instead of members.

+ We must continue reaching out to Hispanic, Asian, African, and African-American communities.

+ We must continue finding ways to provide a solid theological education for our pastoral candidates.

### **List a favorite Scripture verse and tell why it has meaning for you.**

"Fear not, O land; Be glad and rejoice,  
For the LORD has done marvelous things!"

— Joel 2:21

God has done — and is doing — marvelous things in us and through us in the NALC. He is our Heavenly Father. A Father who is always available to hear us. A Father who loves us so much that He chose to die on the cross rather than live without us. A Father who embraces us, who lives in us, and who changes and frees us from the inside out. A Father who is "our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble" (Psalm 46:1).

There is no greater message to share with the world!

# Royan Rodney

*Nominee for Executive Council - Clergy*

**Name:**

Rev. Royan Rodney

**Address:**

Middleburgh, New York

**Congregation:**

St. Mark's Lutheran Church  
Middleburgh, New York

**Occupation:**

Pastor

**Please share some basic biographical information that will help us get to know you:**

My name is Royan Rodney and I am an ordained pastor serving St. Mark's and Christ the Shepherd Lutheran Churches. I am a graduate of United Theological College and Wartburg Theological Seminary in Dubuque, Iowa. I was ordained in 2005 in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Guyana. I served several churches in Guyana before accepting a call to serve in Illinois where I was for six years. I am now serving St. Mark's Lutheran Church in upstate New York where God is very active at work.

**Experience within the Body of Christ that has prepared you for service in this position:**

I was fortunate to receive the call of God at a very young age, and I became ordained at 25 years old. My eight years of experience as an ordained pastor prepared me well to serve in this capacity. I have served churches in Guyana, Jamaica and the United States. I have attended numerous mission trips, and I have a deep passion for missions and outreach.

**What spiritual gifts and skills has God given you to bless this ministry?**

I am blessed with the gifts of preaching and teaching. I served as a school teacher for four years before going into the ministry. I have

compassion for the poor and those who are living in difficult conditions. I am gifted in youth and family ministry.

**What should be the NALC's most important ministry priorities over the next few years?**

I strongly believe that the most important ministry priorities for the NALC should be evangelism and mission. As a relatively young church, our focus should be on equipping leaders to go out and plant churches. And support the other churches who would like to join the NALC but need courage.

**What tangible actions can the NALC, its mission districts, and its member congregations take to live out our commitment to be a Mission-Driven church body?**

We need to go into the community and speak with the people and let them tell us what their needs are. They are communities that are waiting for someone to come and listen to their needs and we can be that listening ear.

**List a favorite Scripture verse and tell why it has meaning for you.**

"You did not choose Me but I chose you. And I appointed you to go and bear fruit, fruit that will last, so that the Father will give you whatever you ask Him in my name." — John 15:16.

This is my favorite verse because it assures me that I am chosen by God and He is always with me.





# Amy Schifrin

## *Nominee for Executive Council - Clergy*

**Name:**

Rev. Dr. Amy C. Schifrin

**Address:**

Elkader, Iowa

**Congregations:**

Faith Lutheran Church  
Monona, Iowa

Mission in Christ Lutheran  
Strawberry Point, Iowa

**Occupation:**

Pastor / Theologian

**Please share some basic biographical information that will help us get to know you:**

Greetings, all! I am the happy mother of two grown sons, Hans and Nils. Hans just finished six years of service as a U.S. Army Infantry Officer and will be starting seminary in the fall. Nils is working as a physicist but is planning a vocational move as a musician. While they were growing up we sang hymns together every night after supper, and it appears that this practice of the faith is still shaping their lives. Life is intended to be lived in relationships, and this family relationship continues to be a wellspring of joy.

As for my early life, I was born in Queens, N.Y. and grew up on Long Island. I received my B.Mus. from Arizona State and my M.Mus. from Northwestern University. I then taught music theory in a small college in Arizona before receiving a call as a Lay Campus Minister and Director of Music in Ames, Iowa (Iowa State). From Ames I moved north to Minnesota and received my M.Div. from Luther-Northwestern Theological Seminary. I went further north for my internship in western North Dakota, and then north again for my first call in central Saskatchewan. Since then, campus, parish, and seminary calls have taken me to the southwest, the midwest, and the mid-Atlantic states. My Ph.D. in Liturgical Studies and Homiletics is from The Graduate Theological Union in Berkeley, Calif.

I have served as a pastor now for 29 years, and I have been shaped by the love of white-haired saints and the littlest of children, by the suffering of those who have witnessed to me on their final journeys and by the tears of joy of those who have received mercy undeserved. I hope that my work as both a pastoral and an academic theologian has been a faithful expression of this gift of Divine Love.

**Experience within the Body of Christ that has prepared you for service in this position:**

In serving on both seminary and non-profit boards, as well as serving and chairing myriad synodical and national committees, I have come to understand that the transparency and trustworthiness of the structures that are established in governance are crucial for healthy patterns to emerge in our larger life together. I tend to look to where we want to go and then work to establish pathways to get there. In establishing our identity as the NALC, we have a grand opportunity to herald a vision to reach the world that has little understanding of what it means to be a church that confesses Jesus Christ as Lord. I believe that I can help to articulate that vision with boldness and clarity.

**What spiritual gifts and skills has God given you to bless this ministry?**

This is a question that is more for the assembly to discern rather than the individual, so I will simply say that I am prepared to go to work using the insights and acumen that God has given me as a theologian, the creative joy that God has blessed me with as an author and a composer, and the pastoral love that God has continually poured into my heart through his people.

**What should be the NALC's most important ministry priorities over the next few years?**

1. Theological education: I believe that we need a three-fold integrated program for theological education that provides (1.) An evangelically orthodox foundation for Lutheran seminarians; (2.) Continuing educational opportunities for pastors that are theologically substantive and intellectually challenging; and (3.) Regularly-scheduled regional

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renewal events that help provide our laity with occasions for growth in faith as they delve into the Holy Scriptures and the Confessions. It is my hope that we would also begin a comprehensive training program for lay catechists and evangelists.

We need to nurture the coming generations of pastors if the NALC is to continue to flourish within Christ's mission. These pastors will come from congregations in which their faith has been formed through the weekly witness that is centered in the faithful administration of the Sacraments and honest preaching of the Word.

Our future as a denominational expression within the Church catholic will be dim unless our doctrine is sound and those who are called to teach it can do so in an authentic and accessible way.

2. Global Companionship: It is in the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings that we come to know Christ through His Body. Before we are able to give thanks in times of plenty we need to know what it means to trust in God's hand in times of need. We have so much to learn from those who have little material wealth yet who still trust in the goodness and eternal mercy of God. While the church has declined in Western Europe and North America, the church in the Global South is on fire with growth. By establishing relationships for mutual learning and edification we may be given both a renewed vision and practical means to truly be mission-driven in our own communities.

3. Integrity of Witness: As the NALC, we are more than "that group that left..." We are an integral part of the one, holy, catholic, and apostolic Church, and our witness is ever and always part of the whole household of faith. In every era there have been aberrations and abuses in the church, and in our time, the mistaking of tolerance for love and of political correctness for divine justice has led some of our brothers and sisters to be ashamed of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Hence, they have tried to remake the church more palatable to the hyper-individualism of modern industrialized society. In many ways this is reaction to the restrictive pseudo-literality of the mega-churches who reduce the Gospel to a propositional mechanistic formula.

Both extremes have been destructive to the church's witness in the world.

Our integrity of witness, however, is based in a hermeneutic of trust. In full submission to God — Father, Son, and Holy Spirit — as He has been revealed to us through his Holy Word, our testimony within the Body of Christ and to the world does not need to be clothed in any of the languages of popular religion either from the "right" or from the "left." Reverence for the Apostolic witness in sacramental and spoken Word is how we practice the faith with we have received.

**What tangible actions can the NALC, its mission districts, and its member congregations take to live out our commitment to be a Mission-Driven church body?**

In response to the priorities listed in the previous question, I would say that,

1. We could joyously fund the establishment of a NALC Seminary Center and regional Houses of Study.

2. We could ask each congregation to establish a link with a congregation or ministry with the Mekane Yesus Church in Ethiopia or with the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Tanzania. What if every congregation sent an individual or a delegation to Africa in 2014, and then raised funds to bring a pastor or evangelist from that same congregation to North America in 2015? Congregations together would develop their own mission projects. By 2017 we might be living out a global celebration of the 500th year of the Lutheran Reformation in ways previously unimagined.

3. Called to love as Jesus has loved us (John 13:34), the NALC in Convocation can ask each one here present to be a leavening agent when they return to their congregations. We can turn to our neighbor and pray together for one another, asking that each of us would be given the words to speak to those issues in which the church has gone astray in a way that avoids any hint of moral superiority, so that our witness to those outside the NALC would be a witness of love, the same sort of love with which

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# Amy Schifrin

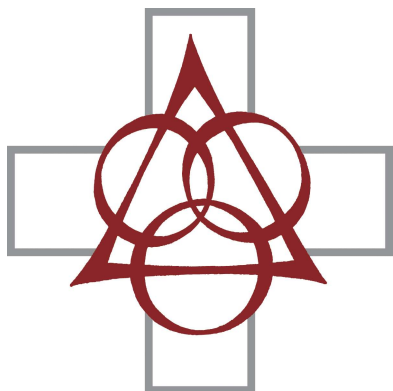
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Christ loves us. May all that we are and all that we do give glory to God — Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

**List a favorite Scripture verse and tell why it has meaning for you.**

Psalm 139 is my favorite psalm, and within it, verses 7-12 have been my constant guide. Verse 12 has been the prayer that has been on my lips more than any other in my life, *Even the darkness is not dark to Thee, the night is as bright as the day; for darkness is as light to Thee.*

The Holy Trinity — Father, Son, and Holy Spirit — is present in every page of the Holy Scriptures. The Word of God was written down with His power still in it, and when it is prayed and proclaimed in our voices, His life-giving resurrecting power is released. It has given me great comfort to know that in the darkest times in my life, the light of the most Holy God was still leading me. *In Him was life and the life was the light of men. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.* Even as I pray Psalm 139, I know the One who is the light of the world, the One who has overcome sin, death, and the devil, has prayed it before me. Even the darkness with all its grasping powers, even that which is most frightening to me in this life, is no match for the One for whom the darkest night — the grave — could not hold. My past, my present, and most assuredly, my future is in this One, Christ Jesus, my Lord.



# Donna Smith

*Nominee for Executive Council - Clergy*

**Name:**

Rev. Donna Smith

**Address:**

Champaign, Illinois

**Congregation:**

Prince of Peace Lutheran  
St. Joseph, Illinois

**Occupation:**

Pastor



**Please share some basic biographical information that will help us get to know you:**

I am a native of Chicago, Illinois. Graduated from Northeastern Illinois University in 1975 and the Lutheran School of Theology in Chicago in 1983. After college and before seminary I served as a single-term missionary to Japan (J-3), one of the great formative experiences of my life.

I was raised in the LCA (which I found through the witness of my Girl Scout leader!) and ordained in 1983. Previously I served Holy Trinity, St. Louis, Mo. (Associate Pastor); Prince of Peace, Freeport, Ill.; St James, Forreston, Ill. (part-time); and Good Shepherd, Champaign, Ill. I have also written for various devotional publications and for the Women of the ELCA (Bible Studies and magazine articles).

I do not come from a Lutheran/churched family, and the church has always been my supportive family of faith.

I am married to Lawrence A. Smith, Jr., a retired judge of the Circuit Court in Illinois. Thanks to him I am the stepmother of seven, step grandmother of 20, and we are awaiting the birth of our fourth great-grandchild. I am currently on leave from call in order to better tend to these vocations.

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**Experience within the Body of Christ that has prepared you for service in this position:**

Currently I serve on the Candidacy Committee of the NALC, as Secretary of the Great Rivers Mission District Council, and as a member of the board of St. Paul Lutheran Seminary.

In the past I served as chair of the Northern Illinois Synod (ELCA) Candidacy Committee for 8+ years; on the Board of the Division for Ministry (ELCA) for six years; as a member of the Board of Directors of the Lutheran Theological Seminary at Gettysburg for four years; and as a member of the Northwest Regional Board of Lutheran Social Services of Illinois. I was a voting member of two ELCA Churchwide Assemblies.

As a pastor I have served five congregations in full, part-time, or interim capacities.

For the Women of the ELCA, I was a writer and Bible Study Leader, and wrote and presented the 1993 Bible Study for the Triennial Convention of the Women of the ELCA ("God's Gift of Hope"). I had previously written the study book and leader's guide for the 1986 LCW Annual Bible Study ("Women Followers of Jesus"); also conducted retreats and led Bible studies for various synodical and conference gatherings across the country.

Prior to seminary, I served for three years as a missionary to Japan (J-3), teaching at Kyushu Gakuin Junior/Senior High School in Kumamoto, Japan.

**What spiritual gifts and skills has God given you to bless this ministry?**

While my pastoral experiences make me acutely aware of the needs of local congregations and individual members, my other experiences have given me a constant awareness of the mission of the larger church — regionally, nationally and globally. Both dimensions of church life color my deliberations.

I have a passion for leadership development and formation and have enjoyed working in the NALC as the candidacy process has been evolving.

Personally, I bring the heart of a parish pastor, the experience of a church worker, and the faith of a sinner dependent on the grace, forgiveness and guidance of God.

I have skills in written and spoken communication and have been advised that I am capable of bringing synthesis to group discussions. I am a good listener and can summarize the thoughts and actions of a group.

I have a good sense of humor, which serves me well.

**What should be the NALC's most important ministry priorities over the next few years?**

To continue to maintain theological integrity and Scriptural faithfulness without appearing exclusive; to engage in outreach and mission in the world while engaging in "inreach" and growth in depth of faith among members and leaders; to be future-oriented and not obsessed with the past — while remembering and learning from past experiences. A great priority is developing staffing and structure that, while not becoming top-heavy or unwieldy, will help the NALC to better serve its constituency and develop for future ministry.

**What tangible actions can the NALC, its mission districts, and its member congregations take to live out our commitment to be a Mission-Driven church body?**

The idea of fostering relationships among congregations (members, not just leaders) through area gatherings and events seems vital. Excellent communications at every level must continue to be developed and encouraged. The average member needs to be made more aware of the efforts and activities of the NALC at all levels.

The development and certification of leaders with strong Lutheran grounding and a desire to share the Gospel through a well-developed candidacy process will be essential to a thriving future for our church body.

While the NALC wishes to maintain as light and nimble a structure as possible, I think there will

need to be constant reevaluation of the leadership and staffing structure so that direction and program can be maintained and developed with proper attention to the demands being placed on our leaders.

**List a favorite Scripture verse and tell why it has meaning for you.**

“Therefore every scribe who has been trained for the kingdom of heaven is like the master of a household who brings out of his treasure what is new and what is old.” — Matthew 13:52

This was my ordination verse, and has always had great significance for me personally and professionally. I believe it is vital that the Church of Jesus Christ wisely steward the treasures of our tradition — our Scriptures and Confessions — while seeking appropriately innovative ways to convey those traditions in a rapidly changing world. Powered by the Holy Spirit, the Church can “bring forth the old” from our treasure in invigorating and inspiring new ways. I have always felt that, as a pastor, it has been my duty and my delight to be a “householder” in the Church!



## **Solveig Zamzow**

### ***Nominee for Executive Council - Clergy***

**Name:**

Rev. Solveig A. H. Zamzow

**Address:**

Grafton, Iowa

**Congregation:**

Emmanuel Lutheran Church  
Grafton, Iowa

**Occupation:**

Pastor



**Please share some basic biographical information that will help us get to know you:**

Born and raised in Germany, I studied within a Lutheran nursing order and sisterhood and worked as a charge nurse until my marriage in 1976. My husband, a Lutheran pastor, served a German parish via an exchange program at the time. In early 1981 our family moved to the United States. I enjoyed several years as a stay-at-home mom until I entered seminary in 1987 — following a call to ordained ministry which I first heard as a confirmation student. My husband is now retired, our sons grown, and we treasure our grandchildren. Early morning swims at the pool provide energy and stress relief. I am a “news junkie” and enjoy culinary experiments.

**Experience within the Body of Christ that has prepared you for service in this position:**

I have experienced congregational life on two continents. Through my former church body affiliation I served on a conflict-resolution team, worked for seven years with a synodical Evangelism Committee and served as conference dean in two different settings. For 16 years I was involved in the educating and evaluating of future leaders as an internship supervisor and member/chair of synodical and multi-synodical candidacy committees.

***Continued on Page 47***



**What spiritual gifts and skills has God given you to bless this ministry?**

My love and passion in ministry is leading worship and proclaiming the Good News of Christ. I trust these correspond to my gifts and skills. My administrative abilities help me understand the intricacies of the church community and my excitement for evangelical outreach has resulted in unique opportunities and growth in various congregational settings. Loving God's people is a deep privilege to me. I am blessed with a good sense of humor, value attention to detail, and do my best to be forthright in all matters. Lifting up the gifts of others and building community is an imperative in my ministry.

**What should be the NALC's most important ministry priorities over the next few years?**

Solidifying our identity as a church body with the four-legged emphasis to which we committed ourselves will be crucial. Making our voice heard within North American Lutheranism and with global mission partners is an important aspect of that — the preservation of our core beliefs and commitments must be our guide in this endeavor. Theological education, both academic and contextual, can provide an important framework toward this goal. The support of congregations and clergy as they live and serve within a still fluid "Lutheran landscape" likewise ought to be a priority. I see all of the above as intrinsically connected with each aspect providing a foundation to thrive for the next.

**What tangible actions can the NALC, its mission districts, and its member congregations take to live out our commitment to be a Mission-Driven church body?**

The NALC, deeply grounded in Scripture and the Lutheran Confessions, is first and foremost a community of Word and Sacrament — out of that understanding we are driven into mission. Evangelism/mission/discipleship for me is not a program but a conviction, a way of life based on our relationship with God in Christ. Our "program" is the

Great Commission! Like each individual, so each congregation and mission district has its unique gifts, abilities and opportunities to witness — the task will be to identify and encourage such. Of course, sitting idle is never an option! Our mission, on all levels, can be aided by building strong bonds of collegiality, district-specific events, Bible studies, prayer, and the connection to Christians around the globe so that those who are already committed to discipleship will be empowered to reach out. Various avenues of communication provide a sense of inter-relatedness, and I hope we can expand those in all segments of our life together. Our stories in the NALC are very similar and our mission is the same. After all is said and done, it still comes down to "one beggar telling another beggar where to find bread." Each of us will have to "Go" in trust that we indeed will walk with one another.

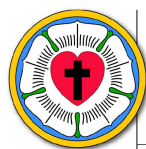
**List a favorite Scripture verse and tell why it has meaning for you.**

"Thus says the Lord, He who created you, O Jacob, He who formed you, O Israel: Fear not, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by name, you are mine." — Isaiah 43:1

This verse hung across from my hospital bed when I was paralyzed 33 years go. Desperately helpless with a newborn baby and a toddler for whom I could not care, it became my lifeline and my hope. To this day I go back to it in times of personal distress and have called upon its wisdom and comfort countless times in my ministry. It reminds me who I am and to whom I belong.







# NALC

North American Lutheran Church

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## NALC News

*Published monthly by*

### **North American Lutheran Church**

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Hilliard, OH 43026-7770

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