

NALC News

North American Lutheran Church

October 2014

NALC Mission Festival is Nov. 6-8

The 2014 NALC Mission Festival — *Abida: Hearts on Fire* — will be held at Upper Arlington Lutheran Church in Hilliard, Ohio. The conference begins at 7 p.m. on Thursday, Nov. 6, and concludes at noon on Saturday, Nov. 8.

Pastor Gemechis Buba, NALC Assistant to the Bishop for Missions, will make three major presentations at the festival. His presentations are entitled, “Missional Capacity Assessment,” “House Church Ministry,” and “Missional Hospitality.”

A major presentation on Discipleship will be led by Dennis Blevins of The Navigators.

NALC Bishop John Bradosky will lead opening and closing celebrations.

There will be a panel discussion on discipleship and mission starts featuring six pastors.

Five different teams came together to plan this year’s event.

The main goal of the 2014 Mission Festival is to provide training and resources.

There will be two opportunities to attend workshops on a variety of themes. Workshop presentations include:

+ Contemporary Worship as a Means of Renewal — Kevin Reynolds.

+ Renewing the Church through Senior Ministry — Pastor Brad Hales.

+ Value of Coaching — Dennis Blevins.



Pastor Gemechis Buba, NALC Assistant to the Bishop for Missions, will provide three major presentations at the Mission Festival.

+ The Power of Prayer in Renewal and Mission — Pastor Eric Waters.

+ First Century Disciples in the 21st Century — Pastor Henry Graf.

+ Pastor as Disciple-maker — Bishop John Bradosky.

Continued on Page 2

2015 NALC Pastors Conference

“Jesus and the Bible: Authority in the Church” is the theme of the 2015 NALC Pastors Conference Feb. 10-12 at the Crowne Plaza Orlando Universal in Orlando, Fla.

Keynote presenter is Dr. David Yeago, professor of Systematic Theology and Ethics for the North American Lutheran Seminary and Trinity School for Ministry in Ambridge, Pa.



James Nestingen



Amy Schifrin



David Yeago

The Rev. Dr. Amy Schifrin and the Rev. Dr. James Nestingen will be offering workshops on the lectionary Scripture texts for Lent and Easter.

Pastors are invited to bring a sermon for Lent, Holy Week or Easter for a preaching practicum that will be a part of the conference.

Dr. Amy Schifrin is President of the North American Lutheran Seminary, Director of the Seminary Center and Associate Professor of Liturgy and Homiletics at Trinity School for Ministry.

Dr. Nestingen is professor emeritus in Church History at Luther Seminary in St. Paul, Minn. He also teaches for the NALS.

The event will also include other workshops and opportunities to visit with NALC staff.

Although the conference is offered for NALC pastors and seminary students, other NALC leaders and pastors and seminarians from other church bodies are also welcome.

Registration fee is \$50 for those who register by Nov. 30 and \$75 for those who register after that date. Registration includes breakfast and dinner on Wednesday; breakfast on Thursday. You may register online at www.thenalc.org.

Mission Festival

Continued from Page 1

+ Real Presence, Real Purpose, Real People: A Realistic Approach to Starting House Churches — Pastor Tom Hilpert.

+ Global Missions and Discipleship — Pastor Charles and Anita Jackson.

+ Living the Catechism: Discipleship for the Lay Person — the Rev. Dr. Amy Schifrin.

+ Vision, Relationships and Healthy Churches — Pastor Mark Chavez and Pastor David Wendel.

+ Disciple-making Lay Leaders and the Next Generation — Valerie Hobbs and Pastor Ray Scheck.

Registration fee is \$100. You may register online at www.thenalc.org. Additional information on the conference is also available on the website.

For more information contact Jenny Brockman in the NALC Missions Office at 614-777-5709 or jbrockman@thenalc.org.

Mission Festival 2014

***By Pastor Trina Petersen
& Mission Festival Planning Team***

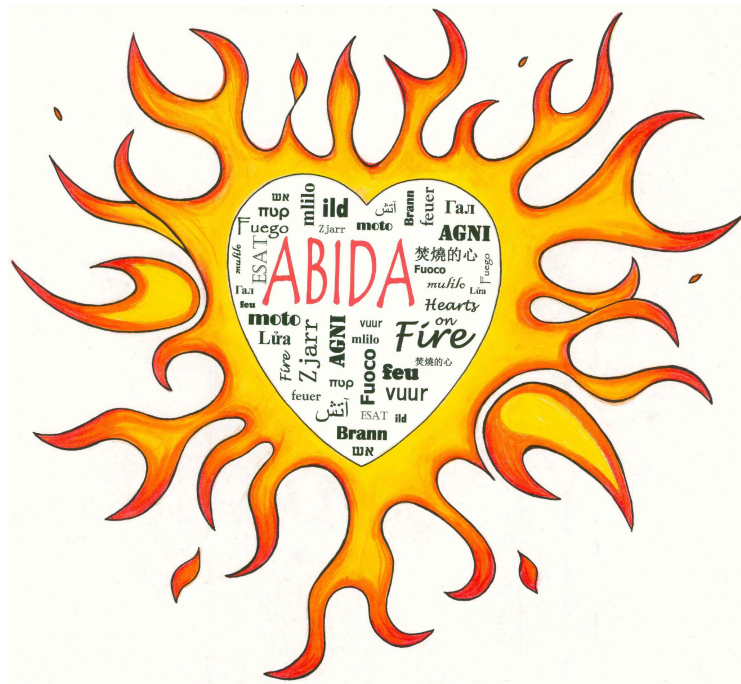
Grace grace! Favor favor! We're so glad you can join us for the 2014 NALC Mission Festival *Abida – Hearts on Fire*. We are ordinary people seeking to do the extraordinary. We recognize this cannot be accomplished by our power or by our might, but only by God's Spirit.

Scripture clearly tells us that we have received power and are called to do greater things! (Acts 1:8; John 14:12). These promises are the major reason we are able to go forward strong, with great courage. Hence we are gathering together. Our goal during our time together is that of disseminating, demonstrating, and dedicating.

Disseminating - “Come and hear, all you who fear God, and I will tell what he has done for my soul.” These are the words of Psalm 66:16. We invite you to come, to hear, and to share the experiences of God’s people during the many sessions planned. Our prayer is that the information disseminated will be a means through which the Holy Spirit will do the work of transformation.

Demonstrating - We live in an age of information overload. We do not want you to go home with only “more information.” We understand that some things are taught and some things are caught. We are expecting that you will “catch the Spirit” through the demonstrations provided. Deuteronomy 6:23 reads, “He brought us out from there in order to bring us in, to give us the land which He had sworn to our fathers.” We are called to be “doers and not just hearers of the Word.” We receive the words of Acts 2:42 which reads, “And they devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers.” Therefore, we depend on the Holy Spirit to provide and empower us to build God’s house and advance God’s Kingdom! We open your heart so that God can move us out of the mindset of program and performance, into the land of rest and response.

Dedicating - We are dedicated to providing an atmosphere in which we will individually and



corporately release religious institutionalism, embrace spiritual intimacy, and catch what the Holy Spirit is doing. Fervent prayer produces manifestation; relationships produce results; and mentoring produces multiplication. We are dedicated to undergirding you on your faith journey! You are encouraged to take advantage of the opportunities for prayer, relationship building, and spiritual sponsorship. Building God's house in this 21st century culture comes with challenges. Like Nehemiah, we have to learn to build with one hand while battling with the other. Do not be afraid! We have the promise of God to accomplish the task at hand! You are not alone!

We have prayed and prepared a conference that provides space and opportunity for you to have an experience with the Holy Spirit and your heart will be set ablaze! We invite you to be fully present, totally open, and completely surrendered to the movement of the Holy Spirit. Follow His ways. Respond within the privilege of being co-laborers in establishing on earth those things which have already been established in heaven. Avail your natural abilities to the movement and power of the Holy Spirit. The result will be supernatural! Ignite the flames of our heart, Lord! We want to burn for you! Abida!

Reformation Conference at NALS North Carolina House of Studies

The Rev. Dr. Joel Lehenbauer and the Rev. Dr. James Nestingen will be the featured speakers at the annual Reformation Conference hosted by the North American Lutheran Seminary House of Studies at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary in Charlotte, N.C.

The Oct. 30 conference will feature two afternoon lectures at the seminary, followed by a dinner and worship service at Ascension Lutheran Church in Charlotte.

The featured lectures will be: “What Holds When Everything Shifts” by Dr. Nestingen and “Church and Culture Today: Challenges and Opportunities” by Dr. Lehenbauer.

Dr. Lehenbauer is the executive director of the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod’s Commission on Theology and Church Relations. He will offer reflections on significant challenges and opportunities for the church in North America today as it responds to and intersects with contemporary cultural trends and realities. Drawing on St. Peter’s depiction of Christians as “resident aliens” (and insights from the classic work of the same name by contemporary American theologian Stanley Hauerwas), he will highlight some Christ-centered theological themes that offer hope, guidance and encouragement to Christians as we seek to share and embody the Gospel of Christ in an increasingly post-churched society.

Dr. Nestingen is Professor Emeritus of Church History at Luther Seminary in St. Paul, Minn., an adjunct professor for the North American Lutheran Seminary, and a member of the Joint Commission on Theology and Doctrine for Lutheran CORE and the NALC. He will offer an exegetical treatment of 1 Peter, particularly the notion of exile. Peter is addressing a people of diaspora who have suffered the double loss of their homeland and their religious community. Their normal sources of strength and stability are broken and gone. Such dislocation is pervasive in our public life. St. Peter gives us some



James Nestingen



Joel Lehenbauer

clues and provides some insight into what it means to be a faithful disciple of Christ Jesus in a hostile context.

The conference will also feature a panel discussion with Dr. Nestingen, Dr. Lehenbauer, NALC Bishop John Bradosky and the Rev. Dr. John Denniger, LCMS Southeastern District President.

The annual *Ecclesia Plantanda* Lecture Series is sponsored by the Michael C.D. McDaniel Center for Theology in the Department of Lutheran Studies at Gordon-Conwell. The center is named for Bishop Michael McDaniel, a former professor and bishop in North Carolina.

“The Michael C.D. McDaniel Center for Theology is proud to honor his commitment to orthodoxy by hosting what we hope will be an ongoing inter-Lutheran dialogue in our *Ecclesia Plantanda* lecture series. We come together as confessional Lutherans to do theology for the sake of the church — in Bishop McDaniel’s words, in order to ‘enhance our common witness to Christ,’” the conference brochure explains.

For details on the conference, please download the conference brochure at www.thenalc.org.

Pastoral Letter from Bishop Bradosky on necessity of Baptism before Communion

October 2014

Pastors and Congregations of
The North American Lutheran Church

Dear partners in ministry:

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

There is confusion and misunderstanding within the Body of Christ today, and especially within Lutheran churches, regarding the relationship between Holy Baptism and admission to the Lord's Supper. This confusion weakens the public witness of the Church with regard to our Biblical and Confessional understanding of the Holy Sacraments entrusted to the Church of Jesus Christ. For this reason, it is my desire to provide clear, concise, easily understood pastoral guidance to our congregations. I have consulted with members of our Joint Commission on Theology and Doctrine for this purpose.

We in the North American Lutheran Church affirm the doctrine and practice of the one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church and the churches of the Lutheran Confessions which assert that only baptized Christians may be admitted to the Lord's Supper, trusting that Jesus Christ, crucified and risen, is truly present in, with and under the forms of bread and wine, for the forgiveness of sins, life and salvation.

The Sacrament of the Altar is the "food of souls," to strengthen and nourish the baptized "new man or woman." The baptized receives the real presence of Christ as a great treasure, His own body and blood for the forgiveness of sins, received through faith (*Large Catechism V, 20-22; Matthew 26:28*).

The concern for the unbaptized is pastoral, in light of what St. Paul writes in 1 Corinthians 11:24. Martin Luther also addresses this in the *Large Catechism*, where he states that those who do not believe the words of Christ and do not believe the benefits offered in the Lord's Supper may eat and

drink judgment upon themselves by eating and drinking unworthily (*Large Catechism V, 33-37; Tappert, 450-451*).

The Lord's Supper is the sacrament of unity, to create and maintain unity with Jesus Christ, the Head of the Body, and the Body of Christ as baptized community (*1 Corinthians 10:16-17*). While reception of the Lord's Supper is personal, it is never private. As the community of believers communes at the altar, they are making a public declaration of the faith of the one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church. "And they devoted themselves to the apostolic teaching, the breaking of bread and to prayer" (*Acts 2:42*).

Within the life of each congregation, unusual circumstances may arise. We acknowledge that it is the responsibility of the local congregation and pastor to provide appropriate pastoral care with regard to admission to the Lord's Supper, as well as determining the appropriate age for first reception of Holy Communion, how instruction will be offered and how the faithful will be taught the value and meaning of the Lord's Supper. At the same time, each congregation needs to respect the historic practice of the Church: Baptism is the entrance into the Church; the Lord's Supper is the nurturing meal for those who are in the Church, baptized members of the Body of Christ.

Each congregation of the NALC is asked to publicize this understanding of the Holy Supper, either verbally or in print in worship bulletins:

All are welcome to receive the Lord's Body and Blood who are baptized in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit and believe that Jesus Christ, crucified and risen, is truly present in, with and under the forms of bread and wine for the forgiveness of sins, life and salvation.

With you in Christ's service,

The Rev. John F. Bradosky
Bishop

With Sincere Thanks and Appreciation

“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our affliction, so that we may be able to comfort those who are in any affliction, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God.”

— 2 Corinthians 1:3-4

Dear Friends,

What we anticipated in the birth of our granddaughter, Reagan Elizabeth Bradosky, was fulfilled. She was born, lived for approximately 20 minutes, and died. Some excerpts from the words I offered at her funeral seem appropriate as a way to express my sincere appreciation and gratefulness for the many ways in which you offered your compassionate love for our family.

On behalf of our family, I thank you not only for your presence but for all the many expressions of your faithful caring, your prayers and acts of kindness and support since Jacob and Melissa first received the diagnosis that Reagan would not be able to survive for long beyond her birth. I realize that it is difficult to know what to say to a mother and father whose baby is destined to be born and to die in a very short period of time. There are no words to take it away, yet you had the courage to reassure them of your love and your prayers. You stayed by their side and reminded them of our Lord's presence.

Your ministry and love for them in Christ brought great comfort to us knowing that when we could not be here with them, you were. Please accept our sincere thanks.

Relationships are all we have in this life that provides meaning, purpose and direction. A life-giving relationship of faith in Jesus and healthy relationships with those in whom we invest our lives in love and care are primary. These relationships have eternal significance. Everything else is dust and rust, as Jesus reminds us.

Heaven is not about buildings or beauty or bank accounts. It is not about the food or the entertainment. It is about Jesus, being in the



From the Bishop

Bishop John Bradosky

presence of Jesus, being with our loved ones who have life in Him. 1 John 5:11-12 says, “And this is the testimony. God has given us eternal life and this life is in His Son. He who has the Son has life and He who does not have the Son does not have life.”

We are also thankful for Jacob and Melissa's faithful witness in pursuing what it means to follow Jesus in their decisions and struggles regarding Reagan's life. When they received the diagnosis, they did not choose the easy path. They did not ask what is the most convenient way to handle this, the most expedient means to deal with this. Instead they choose the most faithful path, the path of following Jesus, a path that includes the cross. They put Reagan's life ahead of their own.

Their witness is that faith in Jesus means obedience to Jesus. They continued to trust in Jesus and His all-sufficient grace. This faith is not an insurance policy or a guarantee that everything will be easy and work out perfectly for us in this life. It is the assurance that this life will not only include the cross, but an empty tomb as well — the assurance of eternal life in the Kingdom of Heaven Jesus came to proclaim. In Galatians 2:20 Paul describes the Christian life with these words: “I have been crucified with Christ and it is no longer I who live but Christ who lives in me. The life I now live in the flesh, I live by faith in the Son of God who loves me and gave Himself for me.”

Trusting in Jesus, His Word and His promises frees us to live obediently. Following Him in the present prepares and equips us to claim those same promises when we face tragedy, grief and death —

Continued on Page 7

either our own or the death of one we love. This obedient trust and faith gave Paul the conviction to remind us that nothing in life or death will be able to “separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Romans 8:39). In Him we are more than conquerors.

Throughout this pregnancy, birth and short life, Melissa and Jacob treasured Reagan. They loved her and prayed for her. They welcomed her into their lives even for the few moments. Even though they knew how this was going to end, they treasured every moment with Reagan. Instead of trying to protect themselves from the impending grief and pain, they loved her. They will never forget her beautiful little body, her eyes, her mouth and her precious face. Even more, today they treasure the assurance that because Jesus lives, Reagan lives with Jesus.

Even though I speak of faith, obedience, witness and testimony, please do not think for a moment that Jacob and Melissa or our family stand before you as those who are strong and courageous by virtue of our own internal resolve. We come to worship today because of our weakness. We come confessing that we are weak and insufficient. Yet, that is the perfect place for us to rely completely on Jesus. Jesus spoke these words to Paul, “My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness” (2 Corinthians 12:9). In those moments when we can confess our weakness, then the power of Christ can rest upon us. When we are weak, then we are strong in Christ.

In our weakness, we are confident that the redemptive love of Christ will transform our grief into greater capacity to comfort others with the same consolation we have received, the comfort, compassion and healing from Christ Jesus. Even now we pray that the witness of Jacob, Melissa and Reagan will encourage you to strengthen your



Bishop John Bradosky holds his newborn granddaughter, Reagan Elizabeth Bradosky. Kristi Bradosky looks on. Reagan died shortly after her birth on Sept. 5 from a rare condition.

relationship with Jesus, to pursue what it means to be His disciple, to believe, trust and obey Him and His promises. It is also our prayer that their witness will encourage you to treasure your relationships with your spouse, your children, extended family and friends.

As I prayed for our children, the song, “Leaning On the Everlasting Arms,” kept coming to mind:

*What have I to dread, what have I to fear,
Leaning on the everlasting arms;
I have blessed peace with my Lord so near,
Leaning on the everlasting arms.
Leaning, leaning, safe and secure from all alarms;
Leaning, leaning, leaning on the everlasting arms.*

The arms upon which we lean are the arms of Jesus on the cross. They reach out to embrace us and assure us of His love that is strong to save.

So may it be. Amen.

Continued on Page 8

Further Reflection from Bishop Bradosky

Continued from Page 7

Spending time with our children through Reagan's birth and death reminded me of the profound love Christians are willing to offer. The Body of Christ abounds with individuals filled with compassion for those facing loss and grieving. We know how to turn compassion into acts of love and care.

Christian friends of Jacob and Melissa offered our family many expressions of that compassion. They:

- + Spoke words of comfort and assurance.
- + Prayed and encouraged others to do the same.
- + Embraced us with their closeness.
- + Cried with us.
- + Sent cards with personal messages and messages from the Word of God.
- + Purchased food.
- + Made meals.
- + Sent text messages.
- + Phoned.
- + Sent books.
- + Completed menial tasks.
- + Visited.
- + Sent flowers.
- + Emailed countless messages of concern and comfort.
- + Worshiped with us.
- + Offered privacy when we needed it and their presence when it was needed.



Reagan Elizabeth Bradosky

+ Provided opportunities for fellowship...

This is only a partial list to make the point that Christians are creative and demonstrative in their love and care for those who are experiencing loss and grieving.

As I reflected on such wondrous love, I began to think of another group of people in our world who are experiencing loss, pain and grief and may not even be aware of it. All those who do not have faith in Jesus Christ are lost. They live in denial of the essential nature of life in Christ, the One who is the Way, the Truth and the Life! They live in a culture and embrace a worldview that denies Christ and offers a variety of empty "gospels" as cheap substitutes that can only bring ultimate destruction even though they offer momentary distraction from reality.

Not only are they facing lives without meaning, purpose or direction, but their loss creates the typical stages of grief including denial, isolation, anger, bargaining, depression and acceptance. Many who live without faith live in the endless cycle of these experiences and the emotions that accompany them.

People all around us are living in tragic circumstances. We don't notice their pain because they have accepted their lives in our culture as normal. Many insist that we are the ones who are deprived of this "normal" life. Some Christians are envious or jealous of the lost when they observe their momentary success or their preoccupation with multiple diversions in a search for temporary joy or fulfillment. If we adopt the worldview of our culture instead of the Biblical or Kingdom of Heaven worldview, we are easily convinced that those who do not know Christ are blessed and we are destitute.

Yet the truth is just the opposite. We are possessed by and possess the greatest treasure of all, Jesus Christ and His Kingdom. We are His children and inheritors of His Kingdom where we will reign with

Continued on Page 9

Him forever. No other “gospel” or worldview except the Gospel of Jesus Christ and His Kingdom offers such profound hope and eternal salvation. For those struggling to live without faith in Christ — the lost and grieving ones, those facing destruction and an eternity without hope — we have been commissioned to proclaim the Gospel of Jesus, baptize, teach them the faith, and call them to a new life of obedient faith following Jesus as one of His disciples.

The means by which we gain an opportunity to share the Gospel is by building trusting relationships. These relationships can only be built through acts of selfless love and care that put the best interest of others ahead of self. It is obvious that we are capable of such love when we are moved by compassionate care for those facing tragedy, death, loss and the accompanying grief.

What would happen if we changed our attitude toward those who don’t believe in Jesus or follow him, showing them compassion and love instead of contempt? What would happen to our evangelism efforts if we offered them the same compassionate love as we offer a family facing the death of a loved one? They share much in common. Both need to experience the Gospel of Jesus Christ through the compassionate love we are called by Christ to offer. I am convinced that, if we approached the lost with the same numerous acts of love that we were offered at Reagan’s death, our church buildings would be overflowing with those longing to believe Jesus and follow Him.

Here is the challenge: try it! Identify a family you know living without faith in Jesus. Go back and look at the beginning of this reflection and observe the brief list of acts of generous love that we received. Add some of your own specific ways of supporting



Jacob and Melissa Bradosky with their daughter, Reagan Elizabeth.

families facing grief and implement 10 of them in the next two months. Then see what happens to the relationship and their openness. In other attempts to reach the lost we offer acts of love but often fail to mention Jesus and our faith in Him.

I have noticed that we are much bolder in writing and talking about our faith when we are attempting to support those facing tragic loss. Don’t forget to talk about your faith, and the promises of God’s Word and the reality of life in His Kingdom when you interact with a family you are trying to reach.

One last word of encouragement: I concluded my message on the day of Reagan’s memorial service by admitting our weakness and our total dependence on the all-sufficient Grace of Jesus. Instead of trying to convince people of our inner strength or perfection, it might be better for us to be transparent regarding our dependence on the power of His presence and life-transforming love. Others might better understand their need and the importance of the cross and empty tomb if they see us “leaning on the everlasting arms.” That is, after all, where we are leading them. Our own vulnerability and honesty can be the best opportunity to expose others to the power of the Gospel at work in our lives.

Compassion for those scattered sheep without a shepherd should bring us to tears and motivate us to acts of love and care for the lost.

Joy in the NALC

So there was great joy in Jerusalem, for since the time of Solomon the son of David king of Israel there had been nothing like this in Jerusalem.

— 2 Chronicles 30:26

The evening before I wrote this, the NALC Candidacy Committee gathered for dinner in Columbus, Ohio, after a long day of interviewing ministry candidates and seminarians preparing to serve in the North American Lutheran Church. Bishop Bradosky hosted the dinner. As I enjoyed the fellowship of the committee members, Bishop John and Pastor Mark Chavez, I was struck by what a great joy it is to serve in this NALC!

I have the sense that we sometimes forget to appreciate the joy that is in us, and the joy that is ours as disciples and followers of Jesus Christ in this new church body.

Certainly, we might agree that there is cause in our North American context and, indeed, the world, for concern, worry and frustration over the events of the day, whether in government, politics, economy or societal pressures.

Sadly, as I travel to visit our pastors, congregations and members, I sometimes find a common thread of negativity as we look out over the landscape and see little to be hopeful about in our day-to-day lives. Isn't it tragic that our young people no longer expect their lives to be much improved over time and many anticipate greater struggle over their lifetimes due to financial strains, employment worries, and the ongoing threat of terrorism?

We knew a time not too long ago when we shared that same negative worldview with regard to our particular brand of Lutheranism. Many of us were so frustrated and disappointed that there was a kind of corporate despair that set in, causing pastors and laity alike to struggle daily as we sought to be faithful Christians in what we perceived to be a foreign land — not at all the Lutheranism we had learned, faithful and obedient to the Word of God. Such despair was so common and became so



Ministry Matters

Pastor David Wendel

Assistant to the Bishop
for Ministry and Ecumenism

much a part of our churchly mindset, I wonder at times if we still carry it with us. Are we positive and excited about mission and ministry today? Or, have we found it difficult to move out of the negativity and frustration into unbounded joy?

At many times in her life and history, Israel also found herself despairing in an alien land. At such times, there was little joy in being separated from her proper home and Jerusalem, the religious center of Judaism. The quote above reflects a time in Judah after disobedience and chasing after other gods led to Hezekiah calling for repentance and renewal in Judah and Jerusalem, with a return to faithfulness and sanctity among priests and Levites, so that the whole assembly of the people could come together and celebrate the Passover feast as they had not done for a long time. The Scriptures report, "there was great joy in Jerusalem, for since the time of Solomon the son of David king of Israel there had been nothing like this in Jerusalem."

The truth is, we are so blessed to be in the North American Lutheran Church! We have a bishop and church leaders who are striving to once again have our church shaped by the Great Commission, focusing on being disciples and making disciples life-to-life. We are in a church body that believes in the truth and authority of the Word of God and takes the teachings of Holy Scripture seriously. We now have a seminary that will form pastors for the NALC for generations to come, ensuring that there will be a confessionally centrist Lutheran body in North America holding fast to Biblical norms with regard to life, marriage and sexuality. We have pastors serving our church who will not bow or bend

Continued on Page 11

Continued from Page 10

under pressure from the surrounding culture, standing firm even in the face of increasing criticism from forces opposed to Biblically-grounded morals and ethics.

It seems most every one of our congregations are asking, “How can we be renewed and energized for vital, dynamic mission and ministry in the NALC?” Our congregations want pastors who share their passion and enthusiasm for renewal and growth!

So, let us embrace the joy that is ours through Jesus Christ and Him crucified and risen! Let us reject negativity and despair! Let us rejoice and leap for joy ... for our reward is great in heaven. (Luke 6:23). After worship each week, let us return to our daily lives with great joy, continually blessing God (Luke 24:52). Let us have Christ’s joy fulfilled

in us, because He has given us His Word (John 17:13). Let us remember that the Kingdom of God does not consist of food and drink, but righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit (Romans 14:17). Let us work together for joy, standing firm in our faith (2 Corinthians 1:24). May we count it all joy, even when we face various trials, for the testing of our faith produces steadfastness (James 1:2).

May we live the words of St. Paul:

“Rejoice in the Lord always; again, I will say, Rejoice. Let all men know your forbearance. The Lord is at hand. Have no anxiety about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God which passes all understanding, will keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus” (Philippians 4:4-7).

Congregations are considering amendment to NALC constitution

The 2014 NALC Convocation approved an amendment to the NALC constitution which would allow more flexibility in scheduling the annual NALC Convocation.

The amendment deletes the words “in August” from constitutional language about the NALC Convocation.

For it to go into effect, the amendment must be ratified by a two-thirds majority of NALC congregations voting in the ratification process.

Congregations are encouraged to consider the decision at their next congregational meeting or schedule a special meeting for this purpose.

The deadline for congregations to vote on ratification is Jan. 25, 2015 — six months from the close of the 2014 NALC Convocation.

Congregational participation is a cornerstone of NALC governance. By requiring congregational ratification of certain key decisions, the NALC

ensures that its members are aware of and broadly support those decisions.

Congregations were sent information about the ratification process. The information is also available online at www.thenalc.org (under the 2014 Convocation tab).

IMPACT

National Youth Event

Chicago - June 25-28

www.youthencounter.org

Jesus Christ, Gospel and Justification

A Statement of Doctrinal Consensus prepared by the Ecumenical Consultation of the Anglican Church in North America and the North American Lutheran Church

JESUS CHRIST

1. The Anglican Church in North America and the North American Lutheran Church confess faith in God the Father, God the Son, God the Holy Spirit. We share the confession of the one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church as we affirm this faith in the historic Nicene and Apostles' Creeds. Central to this confession of faith is the person of Jesus Christ. Sent from the Father and anointed by the Spirit, He is our hope, our life, and our salvation (*John 20:21; Acts 1:8*).

2. Jesus Christ's mission was to "save his people from their sins" (*Matthew 1:21 RSV*). The first epistle of John tells us that "sin is lawlessness" (*1 John 3:4 RSV*). It is a choice (*Proverbs 1:29; John 3:19*) and a disposition of the will (*Ephesians 2:3; 1 Peter 4:3*), which blinds our perception (*Ephesians 4:18*) and makes us slaves (*Romans 6:6*).

3. The result of sin is alienation from God, our neighbors, and the creation (*Isaiah 59:2; Romans 6:23; 8:20*). Without Christ who saves us from sin, we are guilty, lost, and walking in darkness on the way of death (*2 Corinthians 4:4; Colossians 2:13; Matthew 7:13*). The wrath of God rests on us (*John 3:36*). Apart from Him we have no hope and are without God in the world (*Ephesians 2:12*).

4. In fellowship with the Church of the ages, and in joyful obedience to the Holy Scriptures, we confess that Jesus Christ is the light of the world and the only Savior from sin, death, and the devil. Although we were once dead in our trespasses, God made us alive together with Christ and brings us back to Himself by the blood of Christ (*Ephesians 2:13*). He has become our peace with both God and our neighbors, reconciling us "to God ... through the cross, thereby killing the hostility" (*Ephesians 2:16 ESV*) between Jews and Gentiles and all sinners one with another. Jesus Christ is the only way to God.

5. At the same time, Jesus Christ is God's way to us. He is the incarnation of God's truth, and the new life that has been given to us (*John 14:6*). "He is the image of the invisible God, the first born of all creation" (*Colossians 1:15 RSV*). He is the victor over all the powers that would oppress us, by triumphing over them in the cross (*Colossians 2:15*). Foreshadowed in the law and the prophets, He came in the fullness of time as God's gift to undeserving sinners (*Matthew 5:17; Galatians 4:4*). Through Him all that was lost by sin is being restored: We are renewed in the image of God, our relationships with one another are healed, and the whole earth will eventually be renewed.

GOSPEL

6. The word "Gospel" means "good news." The "bad news" is that we deserve judgment and death because we have sinned against God, disobeying His law. By contrast, the good news is that God is gracious and forgiving in Christ, bringing us forgiveness, healing and salvation apart from our own merits and works, through the suffering, death and resurrection of His only Son, Jesus Christ.

7. The Gospel is good news in another way: It announces that the Kingdom of God, proclaimed by the prophets in the life of ancient Israel, has now come in Jesus the Christ (*Mark 1:14-15*).

8. Jesus said that the way we receive the Gospel and enter His Kingdom is to "repent and believe" in His message (*Mark 1:15*).

9. The blessings of the Kingdom are forgiveness (*Colossians 1:14*); restoration to right relationship with God and others; adoption as heirs (*Romans 4:11, 16; Galatians 4:5*); members of the body of Christ (*Ephesians 2:12, 16, 19*); freedom from guilt and shame (*John 8:11; Romans 8:1*).

Continued on Page 13

10. Along with forgiveness and adoption, the Kingdom of God brings “righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit” (*Romans 14:17 RSV*). This comes from being united to Christ’s death and resurrection by Baptism (*Romans 6:3-5*), living each day as those who have been brought from death to life (*Romans 6:13*), as we look forward to seeing Him face to face (*1 Corinthians 13:12*).

11. The peace and joy given us by the Gospel lead and empower us to lives of service and holiness. “For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them” (*Ephesians 2:10 RSV*).

12. The Gospel is received, known and experienced in and through the Church (*2 Corinthians 6:16*). In its proclamation of the Word of God and administration of the Sacraments, and by the ministry of the Holy Spirit, the Church follows its Lord’s commandment to lead His people into ever-deeper discipleship to Jesus Christ, “the pioneer and perfecter of our faith” (*Hebrews 12:2 RSV*). In the Church’s Sacraments, the Gospel is enacted. Through the waters of Baptism God joins us to Himself by giving us a share in His Son’s death and resurrection (*Romans 6:1-4*). In the bread and wine of Holy Communion Jesus gives us His body and blood for our forgiveness and renewal (*1 Corinthians 11:23-26*).

13. In sum, the Gospel is God’s good news of salvation and healing. Through it Jesus Christ becomes “our wisdom and righteousness and sanctification and redemption” (*1 Corinthians 1:30 RSV*). In Him, and in Him alone, we hear the voice of a gracious God, as the Spirit leads us to newness of life in Him, and the restoration of all creation.

JUSTIFICATION AND OUR RESPONSE

14. Justification is a legal term for the exoneration of a convicted criminal. In the New Testament it means that God has accepted sinners by removing their guilt and punishment for sin and declaring them righteous, because of the atoning sacrifice of

Jesus Christ. We who were “ungodly” (*Romans 5:6*) have been declared righteous because of the righteousness given to us by Christ.

15. Together, we proclaim the Biblical truth that we are justified by grace, through faith, on account of Christ “For by grace you have been saved through faith, and this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God” (*Ephesians 2:8 RSV*).

16. Justification brings reconciliation and restoration to our relationships to God and the world. “God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself” (*2 Corinthians 5:19 RSV*).

17. To say that God justifies by grace means that God gives repentant sinners a gift they do not deserve. “God shows his love for us in that, while we still were yet sinners Christ died for us” (*Romans 5:8 RSV*). Our justification is not because of anything we have done, but solely because of God’s love. “He saved us, not because of deeds done by us in righteousness but according to His own mercy” (*Titus 3:5 ESV*).

18. God does not justify us *because* we have faith, but delivers us the gift of salvation *through* our faith, which is “the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen” (*Hebrews 11:1 RSV*). Faith is trust in Christ as Savior and Redeemer. This trust, which is putting our confidence in the Father’s promise to save through Jesus’ life, death and resurrection, is a gift of the Holy Spirit. “No one can say ‘Jesus is Lord’ except by the Holy Spirit” (*1 Corinthians 12:3 RSV*).

19. Through the death and resurrection of Jesus, His baptized followers are set free for lives of obedience, discipleship and service. In response to the gift of justification through faith in Jesus Christ, Christians are called to lives of obedience and sanctity (“...let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven” (*Matthew 5:16 ESV*), but are also given a new commandment, to “love one another as I have loved you” (*John 15:12 RSV*) and to “Go therefore and make disciples of all nations...” (*Matthew 28:19 RSV*).

Continued on Page 14

20. In the present day all Christians are called to be worthy disciples of Christ (*Ephesians 4:1*). We are summoned by Jesus to be salt and light (*Matthew 5:13-16*) in our daily lives, not conforming to the world's expectations and understandings but being transformed into the likeness of Christ (*Romans 12:1-2*).

21. The Church faces a challenging task as it carries out its mission today. Our culture is beset by secularism, consumerism, relativism, as well as antinomianism (dismissal of God's Law), idolatry, universalism (assertion that all, even unbelievers, will be saved), an increasing acceptance of marriage as other than a holy estate ordained by God as between one man and one woman, an unwillingness to value the sanctity of human life from conception to natural death.

22. Because we are saved by grace through faith in Jesus Christ, we share a common mission in the world today. In response to the challenge to proclaim the Gospel in word and deed, we seek to call all people to repentance, baptism and a living faith in Jesus Christ. Heeding the command to love one another, we seek to care for the poor, the needy, the imprisoned and oppressed. Taking seriously the commission to make disciples and to be the Lord's witnesses, we seek to be the Body of Christ in the world today, being the presence of the Incarnate Christ for those who have not yet come to know Him who is the way, the truth and the life (*John 14:6*).

23. As members of the Anglican Church in North America and the North American Lutheran Church, we give thanks to God the Father for the gift of His only Son, our Savior Jesus Christ, made real for us through the power and work of the Holy Spirit, and we commit ourselves to upholding and proclaiming the good news of Jesus Christ and that we are justified by grace through faith as a gift. We also commit ourselves to growing in our mission, together; addressing the challenges we face as faithful followers and disciples of Jesus Christ in our day. In this, we ask God to help and guide us.



*The Board of Regents of the
North American Lutheran Seminary
along with the
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North American Lutheran Church*

*Invite you to attend a
Festival Service of Holy Communion
in honor of the Inauguration of
The Rev. Dr. Amy C. Schiffrin
as President of
North American Lutheran Seminary
and the Installation of
Dr. David S. Yeago
as Professor of
Systematic Theology and Ethics
at the
North American Lutheran Seminary
and Trinity School for Ministry*

*Reformation Sunday Evening
October 26, 2014
7 p.m.*

*Zion Lutheran Church
4301 Brownsville Road
Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania
Reception to follow at the Church*

*Academic Faculty and Clergy are invited to vest.
The color of the day is red.*

Responding to New Mission Challenges

Inspired by a couple of online articles, I'd like to revisit a couple of topics I've addressed in past columns. They are **ministry challenges** currently faced, to an increasing degree, by local churches, and **effective ministry strategies** pursued by many congregations seeking to reach out to new people in spite of these challenges.

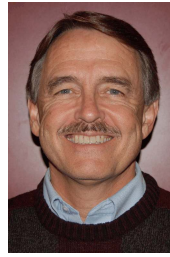
Ministry Challenges

An Aging Population: This is true in the American population as a whole but to an even greater extent within most congregations. Related to this is how few nesting-stage families are attending church today compared to the 1980s and 1990s. And just one factor contributing to this particular challenge with families raising children and teens is the number of kids involved in organized sports activities on weekends.

Fewer qualified, motivated candidates available for ministry positions: This includes not only for ordained ministry, but also for compensated full-time lay ministry positions.

Our culture's steady, ongoing drift toward secularism: The most recent Pew survey (from this September) found that 72 percent of Americans believe religion is losing its influence on American life — up from 66 percent just two years ago. N.D. Wilson, in the June 2014 issue of *Christianity Today*, lamented that too many Christians seem to be buckling under the pressure of increased hostility from secularists. "We (Christians) turn with the (secular) crowd because we want the awkwardness to stop. We want them all to stop looking at us like that."

The emergence of very large, program-driven congregations: In almost every community of more than 25,000, there are now multiple mega-churches. These are typically evangelical Protestant congregations. These congregations give church "shoppers" the opportunity to a) visit with a certain amount of anonymity, b) experience worship services (offered at multiple times) with music led by gifted, compensated musicians, c) feel no obligation to financially support the church (by



In Pursuit of the Great Commission

Pastor Don Brandt

virtue of its size), and d) have a variety of age-specific programs to choose from. Christian author John Pattison writes, regarding mega-churches, "It's often easy for people to go into a big church and be passive consumers of religious goods and services and then to leave relatively anonymously."

Keeping up with our rapidly changing digital age: The ways people are communicating — especially the young — are constantly changing. Also, more people are choosing to socialize online and no longer feel the same need to be part of a face-to-face, physical community.

Effective Ministry Strategies

Now as to how many congregations are seeking to engage the unchurched in this new, more challenging mission context:

Small Groups: This is a ministry strategy that continues to be meaningful and effective in the current mission context. And this is a ministry that does not require a large congregation and can accommodate the very busy lives of your members and visitors. The most important key is to have competent, trustworthy small group leaders. Once you have that, you will find small groups to be perhaps the single best strategy for "making disciples." If you need practical suggestions for this ministry, and did not see my column on this topic, email me.

Staffing for Ministry: I have now been at my current call since 1995. Since then, Our Savior's Lutheran Church has experienced a remarkable

Continued on Page 16

degree of continuity in ministry staff positions. This has been accomplished, to a large degree, by hiring from within our congregation. The current size of our staff — including our school — is 35 people. Over 80 percent of them (including one of our ordained pastors) were members when they joined our staff. I am fully aware of some of the pitfalls that accompany this strategy, including the consequences of more than one member applying for the same position. However, this has not been a problem for us. Overall, hiring from within has proven to be a significant blessing for our total ministry. Also, some of our part-time positions have been created with specific members in mind; members who were uniquely gifted for that responsibility.

More congregations need to be nurturing and recruiting potential employees from within their membership. So much energy and ministry momentum can be lost with extended searches for potential employees from outside our congregations. In addition, the process for screening and interviewing outside applicants can be incredibly unreliable. Some applicants can be gifted interviewees but later prove to be relatively incompetent in a given position. Also, previous employers are often extremely reluctant to be completely honest and transparent when contacted as a reference for an applicant.

Worship Service Scheduling: The verdict is in: If you are considering offering an evening worship service your best time will probably be starting that service sometime between 5 p.m. and 6 p.m. on Saturdays. Why bother with an evening service at all? Increasing numbers of potential attendees would prefer not to worship on Sunday mornings. Why *Saturday* evenings? Because more and more congregations, over the last 20 years, have found Saturday to be the best evening. Roman Catholics started this practice, followed by many evangelical Protestant churches. Ideas that can increase the odds your service will be a success include 1) offering something for the “kids,” 2) offering dinner before or after your service, and 3) finding a gifted worship music leader (maybe even someone who is already gainfully employed at another congregation in your community on Sunday mornings!).

More Effective Use of Social Media: Social media in the digital age is definitely *not* on my skill list. Since my wife is a programmer/application developer, I have always reverted to strategic helplessness when it comes to anything of a technical nature. But most of us probably have members who are “up to speed” on these matters and motivated to help their congregations as volunteers. Our Savior’s not only has a website, we are on Facebook and Twitter as well. We frequently communicate by email with members over age 30, often with a short message each week. For teens and young adults we are beginning to communicate by texting, not only with individuals but entire groups. So the key is to find the right people to guide you in this ministry. And generally speaking, the younger the better.

Might any of these ministry strategies be helpful in your mission field? If so, don’t be afraid to try something new. And remember: We learn from our failures, not just our successes. The greatest tragedy is simply maintaining the status quo even when it’s obvious the status quo isn’t “working.” God’s mission deserves more than that.

2015 India Trip

Join us for a mission trip to India for the inauguration and celebration of the NALC’s new partnership with India Transformed & UEM Feb. 1-9, 2015!

The highlight of this trip will be a conference “Stay Faithful and Be Fruitful.” The conference is meant to empower the church planters and pastors in India to stay focused on what God has called them to do: Preach, teach and disciple and establish multiplying discipleship congregations.

Other highlights include time spent at UEM’s office with their leaders in Bangalore, visiting the Talitha Cumi ministry, a one-day conference with the NALC’s missionaries, and the possibility to extend the trip to do sightseeing in Delhi.

For more information contact Jenny Brockman in the NALC Missions Office at 614-777-5709 or jbrockman@thenalc.org.