

NALC News

North American Lutheran Church

February - March 2015

NALC calls Jeff and Mim Nellermoe to serve in China

In the summers of 2013 and 2014, Pastor Jeff and Miriam Nellermoe assisted with China Service Ventures' summer youth camps. Feeling called to return to China to continue the work on a more regular basis, Jeff and Mim are now preparing to move overseas and begin full-time service.

Jeff and Mim were commissioned by China Service Ventures and recently called by the North American Lutheran Church to serve in China.

They will travel to Beijing for a period of intensive language training. Once that is complete, they will move south to Henan and work primarily with Chinese leaders to mentor them and equip them for lives of service.

Jeff graduated from Texas Lutheran College and from Luther Seminary. He completed his Ph.D. in Integrated Marketing Communication at the University of Utah. He most recently served as pastor of Good Shepherd Lutheran Church in Sandy, Utah.

His recreational pursuits include motorcycles, horses, skiing, archery, golf, and biking. Aside from sports, he loves to play guitar and sing, watch movies, and read good fiction novels.

Mim, who grew up in Salt Lake City, has a bachelor's degree from Texas Lutheran College and a Masters in Education from Augustana



Mim and Pastor Jeff Nellermoe

College in Sioux Falls, S.D. Most recently she coached and taught at Another Way School in Park City, Utah. Mim loves all sports and animals.

More information on how to provide financial and prayer support for the Nellermoes is available online at thenalc.org/global-workers. You can learn more about the work of China Service Ventures at chinaserviceventures.org.

China Service Ventures' summer youth camps are featured in an article on Page 2.

Summer youth camps in China

By John Peterson

Did you know that the NALC is a part of summer youth camps in China?

A friendship between Bishop John Bradosky, Pastor Gemechis Buba and Dr. Paul Martinson, one of the founders of China Service Ventures, was the seed that gave birth to China Service Ventures becoming an official NALC ministry partner.

One of the precious ministries that God has opened to China Service Ventures in China is the *Bo Ai* (Boundless Love) summer camp program for rural poor high school and middle school age youth.



China Service Ventures is a Christian non-profit organization based in St. Paul, Minn. It is committed to serving the rural poor in Henan, China, and has as its motto Jesus' words: *"Not to be served, but to serve."*

CSV's work is rooted in the work of early 20th century Lutheran missionaries to China. This year CSV celebrates its 14th anniversary.

It was in the early years that CSV's founders shared with Chinese government and school officials their wish to serve the rural poor. From that request CSV was asked to partner with the schools to provide funds so that children of rural poor families might be able to attend high school.

Touched by CSV's sincerity to help, the officials dubbed the program *"Bo Ai,"* which translated into English means "Boundless Love." CSV currently provides some form of scholarship to nearly 120 high school and middle school students.

Even though CSV has a local Chinese staff person to oversee this program, early on it became obvious that it was impossible for one person to give care to so many. In 2009 a pilot summer youth camp was

launched with the hope of having these dear kids know God's love. Obviously, there are restrictions to what CSV can share, but God is faithful to open doors for witness.

Emma, one of our U.S. counselors, described it this way, "Throughout the summer I was able to see God work in such amazing ways. God placed questions on the students' hearts constantly. Not one week went by that I did not get to share the Gospel."

This past summer CSV served nearly 240 campers in five camps. Not all of these were *Bo Ai* students. We have given permission to our partner schools to choose some of the students that they wish to send, and we give places for some of the officials' children. Some wonderful surprises have taken place in this mix of students.

A businessman sent his daughter to attend our first camp. Nancy returned for the next two summers and became a Christian. When asked why she believes in Jesus, she said, "Jesus chose me; I didn't choose him."

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Going on she shared, "How grateful I am that the grace of God has been given to me. ... I also want to help others because I know that there must be a lot of people like I used to be, lost like me."

Nancy has graduated from university and now works for CSV. One of her great loves is her leadership role in our summer camps. Her father visits to encourage us.

Without the partnership of others CSV could not do this camp work. Lake Wapogasset Lutheran Bible Camp in Amery, Wis., has been a faithful partner from the beginning.

Then, in 2013, Pastor Jeff and Mim Neller-moe joined our camp team. They have extensive camp experience, which includes leading Christian sports camps overseas. In June 2014 they were hired to work full-time with CSV. They have recently become sponsored missionaries of the NALC.

Our summer counselor team is made up of young adults from the United States, Hong Kong, and China. This summer we will add a team from Australia, and Pastor Gemechis Buba has expressed his hope that future camps will include young adults from the NALC and from Ethiopia.



Jeff reflected on the camps: "It's amazing. God has brought the nations to this little village in China to do His wonders."

Would you like to join us? We are currently receiving applications for volunteer counselors for 2015. Visit us at our website for more information and an application form chinaserviceventures.org.

Thank you for your support! Our partnership is truly a blessing to our Kingdom work.

John Peterson is China Service Ventures Mission Coordinator and Boundless Love Camp Director.

CSV hosts Missionary Trail trip to China

China Service Ventures will host a Missionary Trail Trip May 6-22. Accompanied by knowledgeable guides from China Service Ventures, travelers will become acquainted with important aspects of missionary history and see and experience CSV's current work in China.

Participants will visit famous Chinese landmarks such as the Great Wall of China and also enjoy a Yangtze River Cruise through the Three Gorges.

The group will also travel to areas in which early Lutheran missionaries served and visit ongoing

projects that are the result of these missionaries' labors.

The guides for the journey will be Dr. Tom Stertz, President of China Service Ventures, and Dr. Yaning Xu, China Relations Coordinator for CSV. They bring with them a wealth of knowledge and experience in Chinese missions and travel.

More information is available online at chinaserviceventures.org or by contacting Tom Stertz at tstertz@chinaserviceventures.org.

Worship Wars Peace Talks

2015 Canadian Rockies Theological Conference

“Worship Wars Peace Talks” is the theme of the 2015 Canadian Rockies Theological Conference April 14-17 at the Coast Hotel and Conference Centre in Canmore, Alberta, just outside of the beautiful Banff National Park.

The conference will feature presentations by traditional Lutheran liturgical scholars and a contemporary Christian musician as well as discussions and dialog between the presenters and participants.



Steve Bell



Amy Schiffrin



Frank Senn

Contemporary music will be represented by Steve Bell, a singer-songwriter and guitarist based in Winnipeg, Manitoba. He is among the best-known Christian musicians in Canada and is an accomplished songwriter and record producer.

liturgical scholar, and Senior of the Society of the Holy Trinity.

Steve Bell will also perform a concert on the Wednesday night of the conference.

Traditional music and liturgy will be represented by the Rev. Dr. Amy Schiffrin and the Rev. Dr. Frank Senn. Dr. Schiffrin is President of the North American Lutheran Seminary and Director of the NALS Seminary Center, and Associate Professor of Liturgy and Homiletics at Trinity School for Ministry in Ambridge, Pa. Dr. Senn is a Lutheran pastor,

The cost for the conference is \$300 (Canadian) (until March 13) and includes breakfast and lunch each day.

More information is available on Facebook or by contacting Pastor Karl Johnsen at 780-433-7082 or kjohnsen@calvarylutheran.ca.

Canadian youth gathering is May 15-18

The NALC Canadian Mission District will be hosting a Lutheran Youth Together Event (LYTE) Gathering May 15-18 at Goldeye Centre near Nordegg, Alberta. The Goldeye Centre provides many opportunities for outdoor activities.

This event is for youth who are in Grade 7-12. Young adults are also encouraged to attend as Leaders in Training and Example.

The theme of the event will be “Deeper” as participants will ponder deeply what it means to have our identity in Christ through our Baptism. NALC Bishop John Bradosky will be the keynote speaker.

Tangled Blue will lead worship. Aimee and Joel Pakan, the members of the group, are gifted worship leaders.

The mission component of the event is based on our theme on Baptism and water. Kevin Herr of Water Missions International will share their life-changing ministry of providing safe drinking water.

The cost of the four-day gathering is \$340 (until Feb. 15), which includes all meals, accommodations and programming.

For more information contact Shelly Ree at luthyouth@xplornet.com or 780-674-2788.

Martyrdom themes planned for NALC Convocation, theological conference

Martyrdom and faithful witness will provide a common theme for the 2015 NALC Convocation and the theological conference that precedes it.

The “Lutheran Week” events will be held Aug. 11-14 at the Hyatt Regency Hotel in the Dallas-Fort Worth International Airport.

“Martyr: Life-giving Witness” is the theme for the 2015 NALC Convocation to be held Aug. 12-14. The Convocation will begin at 1:30 p.m. Wednesday, Aug. 12, with special Mission Intensive sessions including speakers and workshops to highlight the NALC’s commitment to its Mission-Driven core value and to equip congregations for mission.

Mission Districts will meet on Wednesday evening.

The Women of the NALC Annual Gathering will take place during Lutheran week at a date and time to be determined.

Convocation business sessions on Aug. 13-14 will include speakers on the theme as well as church business including the election of bishop and members of the Executive Council and Court of Adjudication. The Convocation is expected to conclude by 5 p.m. Friday.

“Martyrdom and the Sufferings of the Righteous” is the theme for the Carl E. Braaten and Robert D. Benne Lectures in Theology Aug. 11-12.

Speakers for the conference include Dr. Michael DeJonge, Associate Professor in Religious Studies at the University of Southern Florida; Dr. Paul R. Hinlicky, Tise Professor of Lutheran Studies at Roanoke College; Dr. Judy Stack-Nelson, instructor in religion at Augsburg College; Dr. Hans Weirsmas, associate professor of religion at Augsburg College; and two others yet to be confirmed.

Watch the NALC website for more information.

Nominations being received for Bishop, Executive Council, Court of Adjudication

Nominations are now being received for positions to be elected at the 2015 NALC Convocation Aug. 12-14 at the Hyatt Regency Hotel in the Dallas-Fort Worth International Airport.

The Convocation will elect the bishop, two members of the NALC Executive Council (one lay person and one pastor) and two members of the Court of Adjudication.

Congregations are welcome to nominate individuals for any of the open positions as well as for the 2016 Nominating Committee. Nominations may also be made by delegates to the Convocation.

Brief descriptions of the duties of each position are available on the NALC website.

Please submit nominations by May 1. This will enable the committee to meet the constitutional deadline to make biographical information available to NALC members.

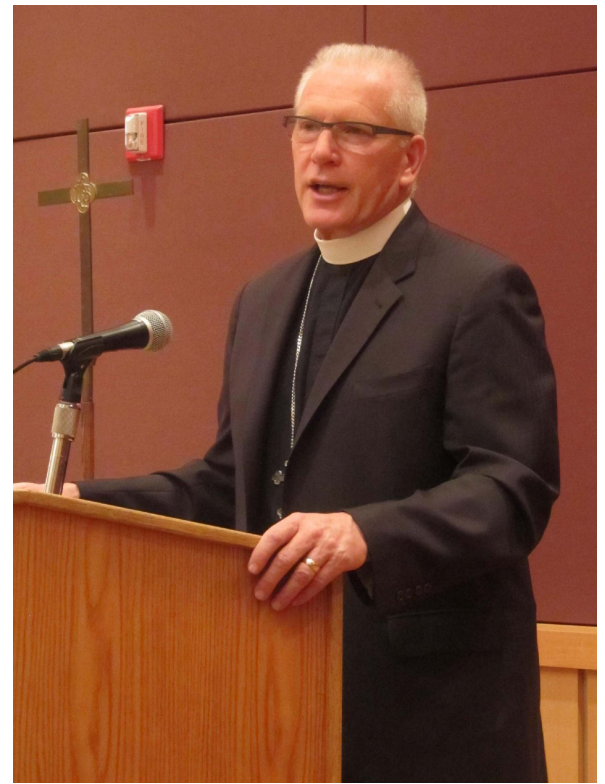
To submit a nomination, please complete the Nomination Form available on the NALC website (under the 2015 Convocation tab) and return it to the Nominating Committee.

Nominees will be asked to complete the Nominee Biographical Form, which then will be made available to NALC congregations and to Convocation delegates.

Questions may be addressed to the Nominating Committee at nominations@thenalc.org.



Bishop John Bradosky presided over the blessing of oil for use in congregations. Pastor David Wendel was assisting minister.



Bishop John Bradosky addresses the Pastors Conference.



2015 NALC Pastors Conference

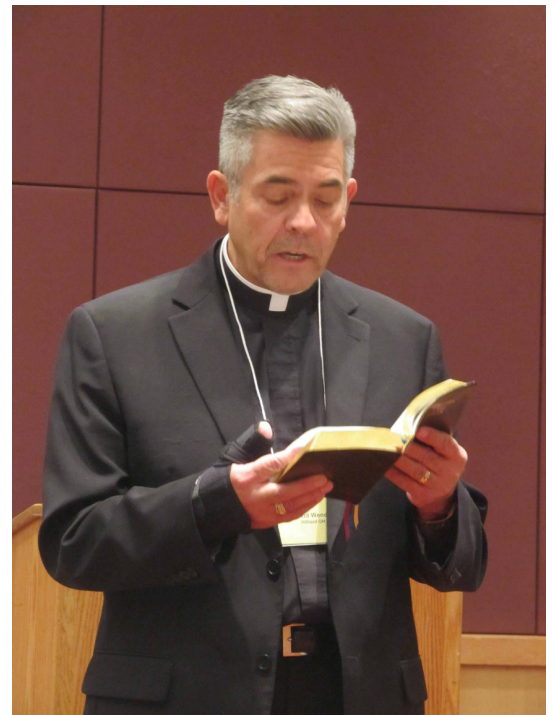
**February 10-12
Orlando, Florida**



Conference attendees posed for a group photo.



Dr. David Yeago of the North American Lutheran Seminary gave two lectures at the 2015 NALC Pastors Conference.



Pastor David Wendel, Assistant to the Bishop for Ministry and Ecumenism, led daily prayer throughout the conference.



Participants enjoy an outdoor barbeque.



The Rev. Dr. Amy Schiffrin and Pastor David Wendel led a workshop on worship — one of three different workshops offered.

Jesus and the Bible: Authority in the Church



Dr. James Nestingen led the pastors in an overview of lectionary texts for Lent, Holy Week, and Easter.

Carolinas Disaster Training is March 28

A Disaster Preparedness Training for the Carolinas Mission District will be held March 28 at Union Lutheran Church in Salisbury, N.C., 9 a.m. to 4 p.m.

The NALC Disaster Response Task Force offers educational workshops to provide training to volunteers in participating congregations to prepare them to form volunteer disaster teams.

This disaster preparedness and response training is intended for those interested in learning how the NALC responds to domestic disasters and how congregations and individuals can be part of the team. Each Mission District assists in the formation of teams and the preparedness training.

Cost is \$50.00 per person and covers both basic and specialized levels of training. Recognized credentials will be provided.

Two levels of training are covered. Level One/Basic provides training in unskilled disaster response for debris removal and basic information on FEMA regulations. Level Two/Specialized offers training in case management, donations management, volunteer team coordination, spiritual and emotional care, and construction estimating. Following Level One training, participants will complete a strengths survey to see which area of specialization they should focus on.

To register for the disaster preparedness training, download the registration form from the NALC website or call Mary Woodward Bates at 740-509-1132 to register by telephone.

For more information, contact Mary Woodward Bates, Disaster Coordinator, at 740-509-1132 or batesm55@gmail.com.

Congregations ratify amendment to constitution

NALC congregations have voted to ratify an amendment to the NALC constitution which will allow more flexibility in scheduling the annual NALC Convocation. The amendment deleted the words "in August" from language about the annual meeting.

The amendment was approved by the 2014 NALC Convocation. But all constitutional amendments must be ratified by a two-thirds majority of NALC congregations voting in the ratification process.

All of the 218 congregations which submitted votes in the ratification process voted in favor of the amendment.

Congregational ratification of all major decisions is a part of the NALC's commitment to its core value of being Congregationally Focused.

Disaster Response to host servant event mission trips

Servant event mission trips are scheduled for NALC youth and adults during July. Any week may be selected by a congregation.

July 12-17 is the week designated for NALC congregations to provide service at the NALC Disaster Warehouse, Caldwell Ohio.

The HARP Mission will host this event. Youth will learn how to volunteer during times of disaster, including early response and long term recovery. Congregational and Family Preparedness information will be provided.

For more information on the servant event mission trips, contact Mary Woodward Bates, Disaster Coordinator, at 740-509-1132 or batesm55@gmail.com.



2015 March for Life

NALC members were among about 200,000 participants in the 2015 March for Life in Washington, D.C., on Jan. 22. The date marks the 42nd anniversary of the 1973 Roe v. Wade Supreme Court decision legalizing abortion in the United States. "Every Life is a Gift" was the theme of this year's march.



May this Lenten season lead you to the feet of Jesus in true adoration

Dear Disciples of Jesus,

As we enter this Lenten season I am reminded of a valuable lesson that I shared with pastors at our conference in Orlando earlier this month. During our time together we blessed and shared oil to be used throughout the year. I began my remarks by referring to Mark 14:3-11.

The woman came with costly, pure nard to anoint Jesus. Those gathered together were indignant toward the woman for wasting resources, for failing to allocate such costly resources for the sake of feeding the poor. Jesus is present but few are paying attention to Him. They are with Him but do not seem to grasp what lies ahead for Jesus — the cross, death, the source of our salvation. The immediate needs preempt the ultimate mission.

Only one present in the home focuses her attention completely on Jesus, a woman with expensive ointment who is anointing Him. Jesus does not suggest that they never care for the poor. There are always opportunities to care for the poor. In fact, there are so many opportunities to be so busy in ministry that we take little time to be as completely focused on Jesus as this woman. We can easily become like those who belittle her for being so completely immersed in the presence of Jesus.

She breaks the flask and pours out the entire contents over Jesus. Perhaps her acts are an expression of her brokenness and her faith — offering everything she is and has, her sacrificial gift, her faith, and her compassionate love for Him.

Jesus brings an end to their scolding by affirming her. He tells them to leave her alone! Her adoration is a beautiful thing and they would do well to learn from her. He reminds them again of His own death and burial by pointing out that she is preparing His body in advance for burial.

The subject of His mission and means of accomplishing it has yet to be fully comprehended or embraced by those who have been with Him for



From the Bishop

Bishop John Bradosky

much longer. Yet, this woman was willing to make herself a participant in His passion and death.

Jesus provides eternal affirmation of her devotion, assuring her and all those present that wherever the Gospel is preached what she has done will be told and retold in memory of her. This is awe-filled intimacy, drawing close to Jesus without mitigating the awe and wonder rightfully due the only Son of God, the Lord of life and the Savior of the world.

Luke's version of this encounter with Jesus provides even greater detail regarding the lack of response from those who knew Him best. While they criticize the woman, Jesus points out the lack of hospitality he received. He was treated without any special recognition.

Jesus reminds Simon of the contrast between his response and that of the woman. He says to Simon: "You gave me no water but she washed my feet with her tears. You gave me no towel but she dried my feet with her hair. You gave me no kiss but she has not stopped kissing my feet. You gave me no oil but she anointed my feet."

It is a problem that manifests itself in our lack of devotion to Jesus. We treat Him as though He were a peer, another friend, a teacher among other wise instructors, a philosopher offering one path among many, just one savior among many sources of salvation, one social activist among many seeking justice and equality to remedy our inhumanity.

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We hear His name so frequently we become unaware of His power. We participate in His meal numb to His presence. We pray as if He is our servant whose only purpose is to accomplish our will. We worship Him hoping to be entertained, hoping that he will validate and fulfill our emotional needs.

We hear His Word proclaimed and prefer to offer arguments making its meaning less challenging, fending off any need for repentance, transformation or obedience. This familiarity with Jesus truly breeds contempt.

Lent is a season that compels us to turn to Jesus as this woman did, to fully utilize the spiritual disciplines and draw close in true intimate faith. Such faith is filled with the full recognition of who Jesus is — the Savior of the world. His grace forgives and redeems, drawing us into repentance and transformation of life.

May this Lenten season lead you to the feet of Jesus in true adoration, acknowledging the full extent of His redemptive love, the cross. No other path leads to resurrection.

With you following Him,

Bishop John Bradosky

Bishop to host tour of Greece, Turkey

NALC Bishop John Bradosky will host a trip to the Biblical and classical sites of Greece and Turkey Oct. 21-31. The 11-day tour will follow the journeys of St. Paul and includes a three-day cruise. There is an optional three-day extension to Rome.

Contact Pam Charas at mcharas@earthlink.net or 937-434-0993 for a flyer and registration form.

The poster features a large, stylized word "IMPACT" in white, block letters with a textured, crystalline interior. Below it, the text "National Youth Event | June 25-28, 2015 | Chicago, IL" is written in a bold, white sans-serif font. Underneath that, "Featuring: Pastor Bill Yonker, Bread of Stone, and more!" is also in white. The background is a photograph of a young man in a blue shirt playing a double bass on a stage, with a crowd of young people in the foreground. The bottom of the poster has a dark blue diagonal band containing the "Youth ENCOUNTER" logo and the tagline "Partnering with Christian communities to strengthen their youth ministry." in white.

IMPACT

National Youth Event | June 25-28, 2015 | Chicago, IL
Featuring: Pastor Bill Yonker, Bread of Stone, and more!

Partnering with Christian communities to strengthen their youth ministry.

Youth
ENCOUNTER

Traditionally Grounded

By Pastor Ken Kimball

Why is Traditionally Grounded a core value of the NALC?

It is telling that in the planning that led to the establishment of the NALC, that of all the appellations and descriptions by which we tried to picture and envision what kind of church body the NALC might be, one word was conspicuously and deliberately absent: “new.”

But if not *new*, then what? Organizationally the NALC would be (and is) a young church body but in forming it we heeded the admonition of Jeremiah 6:16: “This is what the Lord says: Stand at the crossroads and look; ask for the ancient paths, ask where the good way is, and walk in it, and you will find rest for your souls.”

Those involved in the formation of the NALC in 2009-2010 shared the conviction that the NALC had to be more than just a reaction to the ecclesiastical struggle (and defeat) we had experienced; otherwise we would end up as an angry and bitter church, defined solely by what we were against, stuck in the crisis provoked by the decisions and consequences of 2009. To have done so would leave us still bound to our former church body, making it the starting point and measure by which we defined ourselves.

To find our starting point we had to look further back and more deeply, to ask for the ancient paths, to ask where the good way is and walk in it. Our touchstone for what the NALC was to believe and teach and practice then was not to be “Whatever was wrong with our former church body, let’s do the opposite” but rather “What do we need to do to be faithful and consistent with (in order of authority) the Scriptures, the creeds, the Lutheran Confessions, and the traditions handed on to us by the Church from its beginning until now?”

Rather than seeing the faith, forms, and practices of the Church before us as constraints to be severed and discarded, the NALC in its birth decisively

affirmed its commitment and connection to the Church before us, albeit through solidly Lutheran lenses:

We affirm the ecumenical creeds and the faithful witness of the Church across time and space. We endorse the form and practices of the universal Church that are consistent with Scripture, particularly the Office of the Ministry and the tradition of worship under Word and Sacrament. We seek dialogue and fellowship with other Lutheran Churches and with faithful Christians of other confessions (from the NALC website).

The purpose of tradition is to hand over or deliver Christ and His forgiveness and salvation to sinners across time and space, to pass on what we ourselves have received from those who handed it on to us (e.g. 1 Corinthians 11:23, 15:3ff; Jude 3; et al).

At the living heart of the tradition of the Church, of course, are the Scriptures — the source and measure for what the Church hands on through the public ministry of Word and Sacrament.

Then come the Creeds and Confessions, not as additions to Scripture but as faithful expositions and summaries of the Scriptures by which to measure the faithfulness of preaching, teaching, and practice.

Third come the time-tested forms of ordained ministry and the ministry of oversight attested by Scripture which exercise the public ministry of Word and Sacrament and hold ordained ministers and congregations accountable to the Scriptures, the creeds, and Confessions.

Pastor Ken Kimball serves Old East and Old West Paint Creek Lutheran Churches of rural Waterville and Waukon, Iowa.

This article is reprinted from the February newsletter of the NALC’s Iowa Mission District.

Water Sunday can make a difference

Join with other NALC congregations in observing Water Sunday on April 26 and help transform lives in communities all over the world through the work of Water Missions International.

Over the past three years, Water Sunday has impacted thousands of lives around the world.

In Kenya, Michal Muga from Kager community said about their Living Water Treatment System, “When visitors ask who did this, we tell them it is a miracle, given through God’s grace.”

Your church can change lives through safe water and the Gospel of Jesus Christ!

Water Sunday is one Sunday your church sets aside to focus on the global water crisis through a variety of activities, studies or sermons that bring the congregation into solidarity with people all over the world who lack safe water. It includes a special offering to provide safe water and the Living Water message for those in desperate need.

Whether you choose the beverage fast as a Lenten program, would like to emphasize the Global Water Crisis for the whole month of March or April, or participate for just one day on Water Sunday, April 26, there are specialized Water Sunday resources that are ready to use and completely free.

Join Water Missions International in Water Sunday. Visit www.watermissions.org/take-your-next-step to take your first step.

Immanuel Lutheran Church in Lavernia, Texas, participated in Water Sunday last year and Sherrie Palan, wrote: “Many commented how amazing things can happen through our dedication and commitment to sharing from our abundance. And that’s what it’s all about — sharing with others from what we have in abundance. The biggest impact for me was that our members got it! They are opening their hearts and minds to sharing. To being missional!”

Here’s some of the creative ways your church could participate:



1. Beverage Fast: Challenge your congregation to skip all beverages except for water for a designated amount of time. You can participate for a week, a full month, or as a Lenten fast. Calculate what you would normally spend on drinks for that amount of time and donate it to provide safe water to people around the world.

2. Walk For Water: Every day millions of women and children in developing countries walk an average of four miles to retrieve water to meet their family’s daily needs. You can engage your church and local community by doing a walk for water. Plan a mile and a half walk from your church or a park to a nearby lake or river, fill up buckets with dirty water and make the return journey.

3. Six-Week Small Group Study: This transformational small-group study will walk through three people from the Bible, starting with Jesus calling Peter out onto the water, as they take steps of faith and will provide actionable steps that participants can take each week as they grow in their faith. Each session includes a powerful 4-5 minute video with testimonies from our Country Program Staff around the world, a focus on a specific passage of Scripture, discussion questions, and a challenge that helps your group members take a step of faith each week.

Will you join us? Visit www.watermissions.org/take-your-next-step to take your first step.

ELW: Not the NALC's Worship Book

At the risk of seeming lazy, I'm offering a reprint in this month's "Ministry Matters" from Feb. 2013. This arose out of a recent NALC Executive Council meeting when the ELCA worship book *Evangelical Lutheran Worship* (ELW) was used because that's what was available.

As the council, Bishop and executive staff used this resource, it became painfully clear how much has been changed/altered/revised to reflect the agenda of the ELCA. We agreed, once again, that we need to remind our pastors and congregations that ELW is not the worship book of the NALC!

Although some of our congregations purchased the ELW prior to the formation of the NALC, it is time for our congregations to move away from this resource when possible. ELW does not reflect the Biblical, Confessional and theological stand of the NALC. That became abundantly clear when we compared the services and many of the hymns to *Lutheran Book of Worship* texts in our recent meeting.

That, together with the continued request from pastors and congregations asking for copies of my earlier article about ELW has led me to offer this reprint, hoping that those who missed it the first time will find it helpful in moving away from ELW once and for all.

ELW: Don't Buy It

This edition of Ministry Matters is in response to comments I've heard at different times and different places. First, I've been surprised to hear NALC folks saying, "Our congregation is hoping to raise money to purchase the new *Evangelical Lutheran Worship*!"

I heard several such comments around the time that I was listening to Prof. Jim Nestingen speak at our Congregational Renewal Event in Columbus. He was speaking about having our Confessions shape our worship and our worship reflect our Confessions. An example of what happens when this is not the case, he said, is the new ELCA worship book. "I hate that cranberry book!" Dr.



Ministry Matters

Pastor David Wendel

Assistant to the Bishop
for Ministry and Ecumenism

Nestingen said. And he continued by pointing out the Confessional deficiencies in ELW.

Now I will admit, at this point I thought our pastors and congregations were all well aware of the problems in ELW and that none of our congregations would consider introducing it, if they hadn't already. I thought additional comments about ELW would be over-kill. However, hearing that some pastors and congregations are still considering purchase of *Evangelical Lutheran Worship*, I decided at that moment that something needs to be said in the NALC about the so-called "cranberry book" before any more pastors and congregations think of buying it!

We are well aware that some of our congregations have purchased and are using ELW. This is not to unfairly criticize or scold these congregations. Quite often, pastors share that they bought it because it was the new worship book of the church. As in the past, they trusted what was in it, even though it was approved by the ELCA Churchwide Assembly before it was seen.

In the past, such Lutheran worship books were critically prepared and theologically evaluated. The materials were reviewed by church-wide assemblies once and often twice, being regularly sent back for changes that would guarantee theological and Confessional integrity.

While there were review panels which received proposed ELW materials and made suggestions, I have yet to find one panelist who made recommendations which led to revisions. Church musicians, theologians and liturgical scholars served on these panels, expressed serious

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concerns, and believe their suggestions were ignored.

The Rev. Dr. Amy Schiffrin, NALC pastor and theologian states, “I was on the review panel for hymnody. There were 12 people appointed to make the decisions and 12 of us in an outer circle who were asked to write reviews. I wrote reviews of approximately 800 hymns. As I mentioned, they didn't listen to me, but then they could deceptively say that they had listened to all the voices.”

Many pastors and congregations have been shocked to see the changes in ELW which are so radical — completely without theological and confessional foundation — leaving the book, to say the least, less than orthodox as a Lutheran worship resource. All should be alerted to and aware of these problems to prevent introduction of a worship book that is not a trustworthy Lutheran book, Confessionally, liturgically and theologically.

What are some of the difficulties with ELW?

The Rev. Dr. Frank C. Senn, our foremost Lutheran liturgical scholar today, says, “The problem with ELW is its consistent suppression of the Trinitarian Name of God. This makes it a sub-orthodox resource.”

NALC Bishop Emeritus Paull Spring agrees, stating one of the serious deficiencies is with regard to use of the Trinitarian formula, or lack thereof. Bishop Spring says, “At numerous points throughout the liturgies, the classic Trinitarian formula is juxtaposed with another version as an option. See, for example, ‘Thanksgiving for Baptism’ (page 97), the absolution (page 96), the apostolic greeting (page 96), the benediction (page 114). One is free to use either version. Pastor Scott Grorud said to me once, ‘Since when is the Holy Trinity an option for Lutherans?’”

Dr. Schiffrin provides another serious example. “In the new Eucharistic Prayers, there is a move away from the classic way that Christians have prayed to the Father, through the Son, and in the Spirit. Father language is avoided in some but not all of the prayers, but a clear example is in the adaptation of the Eucharistic Prayer that was first used in the

Occasional Services book and then in *With One Voice* Leader's Edition (pages 23 and 37, second column). In ELW the *Epiclesis* (invocation of the Holy Spirit) and Great Doxology are replaced with an adaptation of a post-communion prayer from LBW in which the Epiclesis and Doxology are merged so that the word *Father* is not included,” she said.

While such avoidance of the Trinitarian name — Father, Son, and Holy Spirit — is rampant throughout ELW, it is seen prominently in the decision to rewrite and paraphrase the psalms.

When Bishop Bradosky was asked if he wished to comment on the difficulties in ELW, he simply responded, “Where would I begin?” He went on to say he would begin with the psalms. In ELW, the psalms are changed to avoid referring to God as “he” by changing the text of the psalms to “you.” This is described by ELW as “emending” the psalms, which means “to make corrections by editing.”

The historic and accurate wording of the psalms has been “corrected by editing” so that those using ELW never have to use the supposedly “incorrect” pronouns “he” or “him” when referring to God. Bishop Bradosky writes, “The attempts to vacate the psalms of gender reference is driven by politically-correct gender-neutrality and not proper translation. It is testimony to an arrogant approach to the Word of God in which both the translation and interpretation of the texts are a matter of manipulation in support of a larger authority — the agenda.”

This is the same rationale for providing an alternative invocation to worship. Rather than beginning worship only in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, you may choose to say, “Blessed be the Holy Trinity.” Robert Jenson, in his lecture on the holy Name of God at the 2010 Lutheran CORE Theological Conference, said, “No substitution for ‘Father’ or ‘Son’ or ‘Spirit’ can be faithful. One simple reason is that we have a name for God at all only because the Lord mandated this one. It is directly revealed, if anything at all is, and is not subject to our better opinion. ... By making the divine name optional, the ELCA's new book of worship (*Evangelical Lutheran*

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Worship) departs from the faith” (*Seeking New Directions for Lutheranism*, page 118).

Bishop Spring notes this avoidance of addressing God as Father as particularly problematic in the Prayers of the Day. He writes, “There is an intentional effort at neutralizing the person of God, especially omitting all masculine references. At one point, I read over all the prayers, all 250 of them, and only eight were addressed to God the Father (and these were for rather minor observances, Epiphany VII, and some minor occasions). Also notice that the concluding doxology in all the prayers has been changed. It used to be ‘through Jesus Christ, your *Son* our Lord.’ In ELW the formula is ‘through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord.’ An obvious and successful attempt at removing the *Sonship* of Jesus, as if He wasn’t God become *man*, the only begotten *Son* of God.”

Sadly, ELW reflects the ideologies prevalent in the denomination which created it. “These ideologies are reflected as much in hymn texts as in liturgical texts,” Pastor Senn said. “For example, you won’t find ‘All Creatures of our God and King’ in the index of first lines because it has been changed to ‘All Creatures, Worship God Most High’ in order to avoid the word ‘king’ and other terms that suggest ‘domination.’”

We could fill this newsletter with specific references to the unfaithful, un-orthodox material in ELW. Other issues are: the Prayer of Thanksgiving in Holy Baptism removes “through the flood, (God) condemned the wicked” and replaces it with “through the waters of the flood you delivered Noah and his family,” removing the Biblical truth that the flood was condemnation upon sin (see Genesis 6:11-13). The creeds were rewritten without ecumenical consensus, the second article of the Apostle’s Creed itself making the book unacceptable, as the wording is changed to “Jesus Christ, God’s only Son” to avoid saying “his” and “descended to the dead” replacing “hell”, both suggesting that this book prefers to do away with *sin* altogether, which also does away with *hell*.

It’s also worth adding a word or two about “the Word” being read in our congregations. A common question asked is, “does the NALC have an

approved translation of Scripture?” The answer is, no. It may be said, however, that many are using the newer English Standard Version (ESV), which claims to have 85 percent of the beloved RSV texts, although they have removed much of the beautiful, poetic language so familiar to most of us. Is there any more beautiful passage in the Bible than, “Thy Word is a lamp unto my feet” (Psalm 119:105)?

So, it should be said that some congregations are returning to the beloved RSV — the Revised Standard Version. You can find it available online. Download it and almost any church secretary or computer-savvy pastor or lay-person can follow the LBW or Revised Common lectionaries and create your own lesson sheets in 30 minutes or less. It should be said that many of our congregations have moved away from the New Revised Standard Version being used for Augsburg Fortress lectionary materials. Why? The NRSV is arguably “agenda-driven” in many of the same ways listed above. Similarly, many have stopped using the Augsburg Fortress “Sundays and Seasons” online resources for the same reasons — you have to take too much time reviewing and revising these materials to remove the agenda driven materials that are there.

Sola Publishing offers an online worship planning resource called SOWeR. The site is a lectionary-based resource for Scripture lessons, lectionary inserts, children’s bulletins, devotionals, text studies, prayers, hymn-planning, and much more. Go to www.solapublishing.org for more information.

The bottom line: ELW does not support and encourage the theology of the NALC which is Christ-Centered and Traditionally-Grounded in the truth of Holy Scripture, the Lutheran Confessions and what is called “the Great Tradition” of the western Church.

Since at least the fifth century, Christians have considered the maxim, *lex orandi, lex credendi* — the law of praying is the law of believing — as the guard and protection for worship and belief. In other words, the words of worship and praise must reflect the words of belief, and similarly, the words of belief must shape the words we use in worship and praise.

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What we say in worship over time will change our beliefs, and our beliefs will naturally be reflected in what we say in worship — and how we worship. This is why our worship forms are not *adiaphora*, not to be dismissed easily as unimportant to what we believe and confess. Rather, our beliefs must be reflected in worship, and our worship must reflect properly our beliefs. No wonder that when names for God in Lutheran worship began to change, Lutherans in North America were also losing their grounding and foundation Biblically and theologically. ELW reflects and is part of that loss of Biblical, theological and Confessional integrity in Lutheran worship.

For those congregations which might be thinking about purchasing ELW — Don't buy it! Continue to use LBW, one of the best Lutheran resources ever developed among Lutherans. Augsburg Fortress continues printing additional LBW resources. In addition to the pew edition, they also publish the accompaniment edition, the Minister's Desk Edition and the Occasional Services book. Everything in the large Minister's Edition Altar Book (not currently published) is included in the Minister's Desk Edition which is still available.

Finally, what to do if your congregation already has ELW? You might consider giving them away to a

financially-strapped ELCA congregation — trading them for their used LBWs! Otherwise, use only the options in ELW which affirm the name of Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Paste older versions of the creeds inside the covers. Use the baptismal rite from LBW, together with all other occasional services (installations, recognitions of ministries, burial of the dead, etc). Certainly, there are some hymns, songs and resources that may be useful in ELW, but review them with a critical eye, being sure that what is being sung proclaims Biblical truth and is in accordance with our Lutheran Confessions. If you've already purchased ELW, the old adage holds — “buyer beware!” If you haven't purchased it, “don't buy it!”

* * *

Let me conclude this reprint saying our hope is that this article will shed light on the deficiencies and difficulties in ELW, as our pastors and congregations seek to worship using Biblically-sound, Confessionally-grounded texts and resources for the NALC. If you didn't read this article when it first was published in February 2013, consider sharing it with worship committees and church councils, as well as pastors who may be uninformed. May the Triune God — Father, Son and Holy Spirit — be glorified in NALC worship as we respond to His gifts of grace in Word and Sacrament!

Lenten Devotional from Pastor Wendel

“From Ashes to Easter,” a Lenten devotional booklet by Pastor David Wendel, Assistant to the Bishop for Ministry and Ecumenism, is available on the NALC website. Many congregations have printed the devotional book for their members.

In addition to the Lenten devotional, Dr. Wendel has created a Lenten discipline “action guide” that can be used in conjunction with the devotional.

You may also receive the 2015 Lenten devotions as a daily text message on your cell phone by texting LENT to 614-230-0193.

David Wendel and Gemechis Buba to host Holy Land tour

Pastor David Wendel, Assistant to the Bishop for Ministry and Ecumenism, and Pastor Gemechis Buba, Assistant to the Bishop for Missions, will host a tour of the Holy Land Nov. 12-21.

The trip will visit places where Jesus walked, lived, talked and performed miracles as well as where He was crucified and raised from the dead.

For more information contact Jerusalem Tours at 888-373-8687 or Pastor Wendel at 614-777-5709 or dwendel@thenalc.org.

Ministry frustration and burnout

An article in the January 2015 *Ministry* magazine was entitled “Avoiding Pastoral Burnout.” I’m convinced that much of the content of this article by Derek Morris pertains to not just pastoral ministry but also to both compensated and volunteer lay ministry.

Among major causes for ministry burnout listed in this article was **conflict**. This was referring to congregations embroiled in major and often long-term conflict.

Also mentioned was **expectations**. This is when pastors or lay ministers “try to meet everyone’s expectations all the time.”

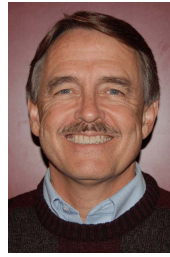
Another cause for burnout: **unwillingness to let go**. This is when you find yourself “doing something ... that you know you should have delegated to someone else.”

Another problem cited was **no friends**. In other words, when you become “isolated and separated from meaningful friendships.”

Added to the above potential causes for burnout are the external, contextual challenges that make congregational ministry more difficult. Consider these statistics comparing the American religious landscape in 1990 with 2012: In 1990, 8 percent of Americans claimed no religious identity. By 2012 it had risen to 19 percent. The percentage of unchurched in 1990 was 30 percent. Today it is 43 percent. “Never churched” in 1990 was 15 percent; now it is 23 percent. All of these changes in just the last 22 years! It’s getting tough out there!

Enough on potential causes for discouragement in ministry. What about constructive suggestions for making your ministry both more effective and personally rewarding?

1. It is incredibly important that all of us learn to delegate. Actually, this is about so much more than delegating. It’s also about empowering and equipping others to be engaged in “hands-on” ministry. This could potentially be the single most effective strategy for recharging your ministry.



In Pursuit of the Great Commission

Pastor Don Brandt

When we delegate, we not only multiply our impact on the lives of others, we also end up with ministry partners who support us both vocationally and personally.

2. Pursue an interest or commitment that is outside congregational life. Bring a little balance to your personal life. Don’t let it all depend on the ups and downs of congregational ministry.

3. When and if congregational conflict becomes toxic, start considering a new ministry opportunity. Some congregational cultures are toxic and dysfunctional — some for generations. If that’s your appraisal of the congregation you serve, it might be time to move on.

4. Try to increase the proportion of your work time where you are engaged in ministries you have both the gifts and passion to do well. Congregational ministry can involve a wide variety of tasks. Some of these tasks are essential to your position, but some are not. Can you, incrementally and over time, begin to devote more time to your *passions* in ministry? And can you then find opportunities to “delegate” those tasks that are burning you out to *others*? Some pastors struggle to “let go” of leadership when it comes to certain ministry tasks. When this is true of responsibilities you no longer have enthusiasm for, you end up undermining the effectiveness of your own overall ministry *and* shortchanging your congregation.

The following quote, by Frederick Buechner, was in a recent issue of *Fuller Magazine* from Fuller Theological Seminary. As you read it, reflect on your own ministry. It’s quite profound.

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"It comes from the Latin *vocare*, to call, and means the work a man (or woman) is called to by God. There are all different kinds of voices calling you to all different kinds of work, and the problem is to find out which is the voice of God rather than of Society. ... By and large a good rule for finding out is this: The kind of work God usually calls you to is the kind of work (a) that you need most to do and (b) that the world most needs to have done. If you really get a kick out of your work, you've presumably met requirement (a), but if your work is writing TV deodorant commercials, the chances are you've missed requirement (b). On the other hand, if your work is being a doctor in a leper colony, you have probably met requirement (b), but if most of the time you're bored and depressed by it, the chances are you have not only bypassed (a) but probably aren't helping your patients much either. ... The place God calls you to is the place where your deep gladness and the world's deep hunger meet."

Pastor Don Brandt serves Our Savior's Lutheran Church in Salem, Ore. You may contact him at donb@oursaviorssalem.org.

'Go' Conference in California

The "Go" Conference will be presented by Mount of Olives Church in Mission Viejo, Calif., May 13-14. The conference theme is based on the Great Commission: "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations ..." (Matthew 28:19).

Featured Speakers are Nancy Beach, former programming director for Willow Creek Community Church in suburban Chicago; Pastor Bill Bohline, founding pastor of Hosanna! Lutheran Church in Lakeville, Minn.; and Pastor John Steward, senior pastor of Mount of Olives.

Cost is \$50.00 per person, with lunch provided both days. For more information on the conference or to register go to www.moochurch.org/go.

Bishop John Bradosky and Pastor Gemechis Buba, Assistant to the Bishop for Missions, received a warm welcome on a recent visit to India.





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NALC Contact Information

NALC Ministry Office

3500 Mill Run Drive
Hilliard, OH 43026-7770
614-777-5709
bseifert@thenalc.org

NALC Administrative Office

2299 Palmer Drive, Suite 220
New Brighton, MN 55112-2202
888-551-7254 or 651-633-6004
nalc.mnoffice@thenalc.org

North American Luth. Seminary

The Rev. Dr. Amy Schiffrin
aschiffrin@thenals.org

Bishop

Bishop John Bradosky
jbradosky@thenalc.org

General Secretary

Pastor Mark Chavez
mchavez@thenalc.org

Missions

Pastor Gemechis Buba
gbuba@thenalc.org

Ministry & Ecumenism

Pastor David Wendel
dwendel@thenalc.org

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Pastor David J. Baer, editor
news@thenalc.org

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