

## NALC Convocation focuses on 'Holy God, Holy Lives'

More than 400 NALC members and guests gathered Aug. 10-12 for the 2016 NALC Convocation at the Wyndham Anaheim Garden Grove Hotel in Anaheim, Calif., around the theme, "Holy God, Holy Lives."

NALC Bishop John Bradosky preached for the opening worship service. He also presided over the Convocation business sessions.

In addressing the Convocation theme, Bishop Bradosky said, "In our preaching, teaching and conversations *Holy God* is mentioned far more frequently than the subject of *Holy Lives*. While Christ is mentioned frequently, the Holy Spirit, not so much!" (*His sermon is reprinted on Pages 9-13.*)

The NALC Mission Festival was the focus of the first part of the Convocation under the theme, "Faith is Made Whole in Community." Most of Wednesday and Thursday was spent focusing on what it means for the NALC to be a Mission-Driven church.

Featured speakers for the Mission Festival were Pastor Gemechis Buba, Assistant to the Bishop for Missions, and Gary Pecuch of [faithwebbing.com](http://faithwebbing.com). Delegates also focused on developing mission plans for their congregations and Mission Districts.

Pastor Buba focused on the Biblical basis for mission. He noted 10 marks of a Christ-Centered, Mission-Driven faith community.



*More than 400 people gathered for 2016 NALC Convocation.*

Gary Pecuch told the Convocation delegates about Faith Webbing and Outcome-based Youth Ministry. "It takes a congregation (not a village) to raise a child," he said. He told stories and gave examples of both ministry models. Free youth ministry tools based on the models are available to NALC congregations at [faithwebbing.com](http://faithwebbing.com).

The Rev. Dr. James Nestingen, a noted Martin Luther scholar, was preacher for the Thursday service of Holy Communion and led a Bible study on Friday.

In his Bible study on 1 Peter 1:12-25, the Convocation theme Scripture, Dr. Nestingen said,

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“Holiness is not a quality we possess but a relationship in which we live ... the gift of living in a continuing relationship with Jesus.”

The Rev. Dr. Malcolm Guite of the University of Cambridge, England, and musician Steve Bell from Winnipeg, Manitoba, combined to lead devotions during the Convocation and led a poetic and musical reflection on the theme. Prof. Guite also gave an address entitled, “C.S. Lewis: ‘Friendship and Holiness.’” Dr. Guite describes himself as a poet-priest of the Anglican Church.

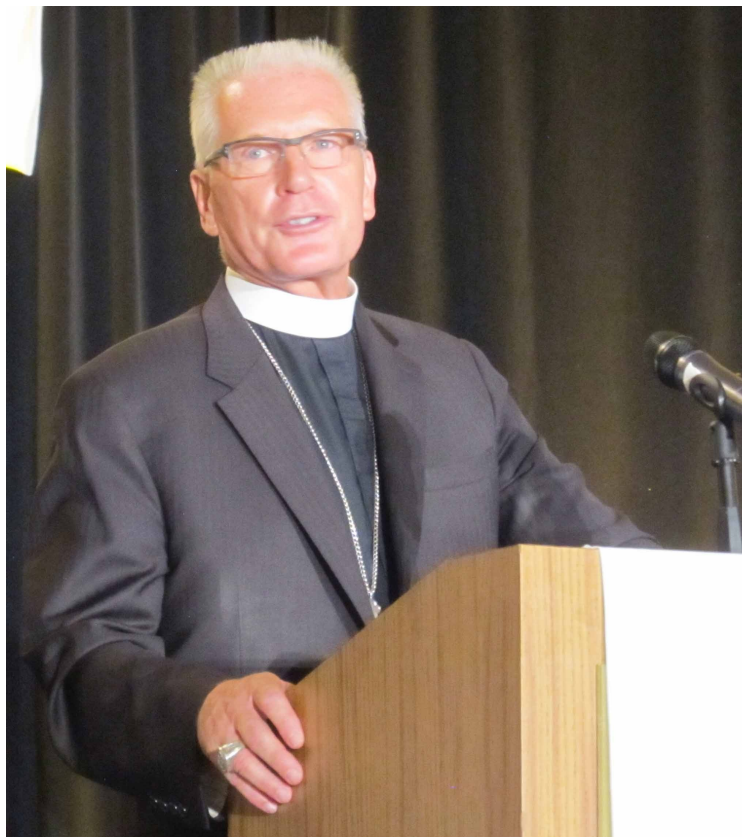
“Friendship may become a means of grace and holiness,” Dr. Guite said in his keynote presentation. “Humble people are not people who think less of themselves, but who think of themselves less,” he said.

The Convocation is the annual gathering and business meeting of the NALC. Delegates heard reports from numerous ministry leaders.



***The Rev. Dr. Malcolm Guite of the University of Cambridge, England, was a keynote speaker for the Convocation. He also combined with Canadian musician Steve Bell to provide devotions and a poetic and musical reflection on the Convocation theme.***

The Convocation adopted 2017 NALC budgets and elected members of the NALC Executive Council and Court of Adjudication as well as members of the North American Lutheran Seminary Board of Regents.



***NALC Bishop John Bradosky presided over the Convocation.***

“Holy Families” will be a special NALC emphasis as a part of the 2017 celebration of the 500th anniversary of the Reformation. Steve King of Sola Publishing told delegates about a variety of free online resources that will be available for congregations and families.

The Braaten and Benne Lectures in Theology, the annual theological conference which precedes the Convocation, focused on theological perspectives on the Person of Christ. Five speakers explored the theme from different theological perspectives.

The Women of the NALC Annual Gathering was held on Tuesday prior to the Convocation.

Video recordings of the NALC Convocation and the Braaten-Benne Lectures on Theology will be available for viewing online at [www.thenalc.org](http://www.thenalc.org). Documents from the Convocation and daily summaries are also available on the NALC website.

The 2017 NALC Convocation and related events will be held Aug. 8-11 in Nashville, Tenn.



# **Lynn Kickingbird, Kenneth Kimball elected to NALC Executive Council**

## *David Schafer elected to Court of Adjudication*

Lynn Kickingbird of Edmond, Okla., and Pastor Kenneth Kimball of Waterville, Iowa, were elected to four-year terms on the NALC's Executive Council by the 2016 NALC Convocation which met Aug. 10-12 in Anaheim, Calif.

Lynn Kickingbird is a member of Peace Lutheran Church in Edmond, Okla., where she has served in a variety of leadership positions. She was a member of the Lutheran CORE Board of Directors from 2009 to 2016. She also is a member of the NALC's Mission Team and the Great Commission Society leadership.

She served as Vice President of Kickingbird Associates (consulting and training services for nonprofits, government agencies, communities specializing in strategic visioning, program and organizational development, training design), 1986-2013. She is retired, but still occasionally consults with non-profits on organizational development and strategic visioning and program planning.

Pastor Kimball serves Old East Paint Creek Lutheran Church and Old West Paint Creek Lutheran Church. He holds degrees from St. Olaf College and Luther-Northwestern Theological Seminary. He has 29 years of experience as a parish pastor. He also served as Dean of the NALC's Iowa Mission District from 2010 to 2014.

The Executive Council is the Board of Directors of the NALC. Five lay people and three pastors had been nominated for the Executive Council.

Pastor David E. Schafer of Waukon, Iowa, was elected to a four-year term on the NALC's Court of Adjudication. Pastor Schafer is retired but is currently serving as an interim pastor. He is a member of Old East Paint Creek Lutheran Church.



***Lynn Kickingbird***



***Kenneth Kimball***



***David Schafer***

He holds degrees from Gustavus Adolphus College and Luther Seminary. He also has advanced training in mediation from the University of Iowa.

The seven-member Court of Adjudication decides questions of interpretation regarding the NALC's governing documents and oversees discipline processes within the church.

Delegates also elected members of the NALC-Canada Section Governing Board. Teresa Peters of St. Peter's Evangelical Lutheran Church in Winnipeg, Manitoba, and Pastor Kevin Ree of St. John's Lutheran Church in Barhead, Alberta, were elected to four-year terms. Ralph Wold of Living Faith Lutheran Church in Red Deer, Alberta, and Pastor Rolf Bjornstad of St. John's Lutheran Church near Ardrossan, Alberta, were elected to two-year terms. They had been nominated by the Canada Mission District.

The Convocation confirmed five members of the 2017 NALC Nominating Committee. Pastor Cathi Braasch of Elwood, Neb.; Pastor Don Brandt of Salem, Ore.; Shelly Ree of Barhead, Alberta; Pastor Bert Schultz of Ladysmith, Wis.; and Marc Voigt of Pfafftown, N.C., had been submitted by the Executive Council for confirmation by the Convocation as Nominating Committee members.

# Four people elected to North American Lutheran Seminary Board of Regents

Four people were elected to the North American Lutheran Seminary Board of Regents by the 2016 NALC Convocation which met Aug. 10-12 in Anaheim, Calif.

Pastor Cathi Braasch of Elwood, Neb.; Donna Evans of Pittsburgh, Pa.; and Pastor Jeffray Greene of Brooks, Ga., were elected to six-year terms on the Board of Regents. Bishop Paull Spring of State College, Pa., was elected to a four-year term to fill a vacancy on the board.

Pastor Braasch retired from full-time parish ministry in 2011. In retirement she has been an interim pastor; a spiritual director for seminarians and clergy; teaching pastoral theology for St. Paul Lutheran Seminary; writing; and volunteering in NALC ministries (Candidacy Committee, Holy Families! Initiative, and as an assistant dean in the Great Plains Mission District). She is a member of Trinity Lutheran Church in Gothenburg, Neb.

Donna Evans is a Public Relations-Issues Management Professional and Homemaker. She has more than 30 years of experience as a corporate marketing and issues management specialist and recognized expertise in public affairs programming, constituency relations, and business-to-business marketing. She was Senior Vice President and Director for Burson-Marsteller, the world's largest public relations firm.

She has served as a staff member and volunteer for Zion Lutheran Church in Pittsburgh (Brentwood), Pa. She currently serves on the NALS Board of Regents and on the NALC Communications Committee.

Pastor Greene serves Word of God Lutheran Church in Peachtree City, Ga. He holds a Ph.D. in church administration. He currently serves on the NALS Board of Regents.

Bishop Spring served as bishop of the NALC for the first year of the church. He is a member of the



*Cathi Braasch*



*Donna Evans*



*Jeffray Greene*



*Paull Spring*

NALS Board of Regents. He has been ordained for 50 years, serving 14 years as synod bishop and 25 years as a parish pastor. He also served as a leader in Lutheran CORE. He is a member of Emmanuel Lutheran Church in State College, Pa., a new NALC mission congregation.

The North American Lutheran Seminary is the seminary of the North American Lutheran Church. The NALS Seminary Center is located at Trinity School for Ministry in Ambridge, Pa.



# Convocation approves 2017 budgets

The 2016 NALC Convocation approved a \$2 million operating budget for the North American Lutheran Church for 2017.

2017 budgets were also approved for the NALC's two designated funds: \$140,500 for the Great Commission Fund and \$525,160 for the Theological Education Fund (which includes the North American Lutheran Seminary).

"As the NALC completes its sixth year of existence, our church body remains on solid financial footing, though a bit less firm than in past years," Ryan Schwarz, NALC Treasurer, reported to the Convocation.

As a way of expanding the NALC's service to its congregations, the 2016 and 2017 budgets plan to spend a portion of the church's reserve funds — budgeting expenses greater than anticipated income. The NALC recently expanded its work in the areas of communications, youth and family ministry, missions, stewardship, and disaster response.

Schwarz told the Convocation that giving from congregations so far in 2016 has been less than expected.

"Deficits were anticipated, but the actual deficits look to be larger than budgeted. This deficit spending will be funded from the NALC's ample reserves this year and next, but that mode cannot continue indefinitely. By the end of 2018, income and expenditures will have to come into balance, either through increased donation and benevolence income, or through reduction in expenditures," Schwarz said.

Delegates expressed surprise and concern about the shortfall in income and committed to addressing support for the NALC in their congregations and by encouraging gifts from individuals.

Church leaders were very pleased by the Convocation delegates' positive affirmation of the NALC's work and by their commitment to ask their congregations to increase giving to the NALC.



*Ryan Schwarz, NALC Treasurer, addresses the 2016 NALC Convocation.*

The NALC encourages congregations to support local and global mission directly — giving to projects, missionaries, and ministries rather than channeling that giving through the NALC. However, the NALC also needs regular support from its congregations for its general and designated funds.

The NALC Constitution asks the Executive Council to report to the annual Convocation the percentage of congregational giving required to fund the general budget. The council again reported that 5-8 percent of congregational income would be necessary to fund the budget.

"While we are disappointed not to be able to propose a balanced budget, the Executive Council continues to believe that in 2017, spending a portion of the operating surpluses from prior years is appropriate to grow the NALC's capabilities to serve its congregations," Schwarz said.



*Bishop John Bradosky presided at the Holy Communion service. Pastor Eric Waters of St. John Lutheran Church in Boerne, Texas, was the assisting minister. Pastor Waters served as chaplain for the Convocation.*



*Dr. James Nestingen, a noted Lutheran professor, led a Bible study for the Convocation and preached for the service of Holy Communion.*

# 2016 NALC Convocation



*Gary Pecuch of faithwebbing.com gave one of two keynote addresses during the Mission Festival portion of the Convocation. He told the Convocation about Faith Webbing and Outcome-Based Youth Ministry.*



*Pastor Gemechis Buba delivered one of the keynote presentations during the Mission Festival portion of the Convocation.*





*Pastor Steve King of Sola Publishing talked about the “Holy Families” emphasis that will be a part of the NALC’s 2017 celebration of the 500th anniversary of the Reformation.*



*Pastor Lenae Rasmussen, the endorsing officer for NALC military chaplains, introduced and described the work of our military chaplains.*



*Pastor Phillip Gagnon of St. Albert Lutheran Church in St. Albert, Alberta, talked about “unholiness” and the reality of evil.*



*Women of the NALC Annual Gathering*



*A panel answered questions during the Mission Festival.*



*Pastor Larry Vogel brought greetings from the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod.*



*Bishop Ray Sutton brought greetings from the Anglican Church in North America.*



*Father Quan Tran brought greetings from the Roman Catholic Church.*





*The more than 400 people at the 2016 NALC Convocation joined in worship.*

# Holy God, Holy Lives



*A variety of workshops were offered during the Convocation.*



*The Rev. Dr. Amy Schiffrin, President of the North American Lutheran Seminary, told the Convocation about the work of the seminary and the need to encourage young people to hear a call to ordained ministry.*



*Pastor Eric Riesen of Zion Lutheran Church in Pittsburgh, Pa., told the Convocation about the NALC's Life-to-life Discipleship emphasis.*



*Pastor Eugene Grimm of the NALC Stewardship Task Force introduced new stewardship resources that are available to congregations.*



*Pastor David McGettigan, NALC Disaster Response Coordinator, described the NALC's work responding to disasters.*





*Revisiting Bonhoeffer's Question:  
"Who is Jesus Christ For Us Today?"*  
**Dr. Carl E. Braaten**



*The Form of Christ in us:  
Christ and the Christian Life*  
**Dr. Phillip Cary**

# **Carl E. Braaten** **Robert D. Benne** **Lectures in Theology** *August 9-10*



*Confessing Christ in the Preaching of the Fathers*  
**Dr. Michael Pasquarello III**



*Christ the Center of Everyday Life:  
Lessons from Luther's Genesis Lectures*  
**Dr. Mickey L. Mattox**



*Admirable Conjunctions:  
The Person of Christ in Philippians 2:5-11*  
**Dr. Wesley Hill**

# Anniversaries recognized at Convocation

## Ordination Anniversaries

### 65 Years

Pastor Thurmond Plexico

### 60 Years

Pastor George M. Rushe

### 55 Years

Pastor Richard C. Weaver

Pastor Harvey L. Blume

Pastor Ronald W. Schmidt

### 50 Years

Pastor Bruce A. Welander

Pastor Ray Rosenthal

Pastor Norman Howard Albertson

Pastor James Arnold DeLong

### 45 Years

Pastor John Bauer

Pastor Thomas R. McCrone

Pastor Kenneth N. Schott II

Pastor Robert J. Groenke Jr.

Pastor James A. Nestingen

Pastor Wayne A. Strohschein

Pastor Kenneth Hauge

Pastor Philip A. Gronbach

Pastor Alan Williams

### 40 Years

Pastor Ann Miller Smith

Pastor Michael Gabby

Pastor Gabriel Baxter

Baumgardner

Pastor Douglas C. Gast

Pastor James R. Palan

Pastor N. Amanda Grimmer

Pastor Michael G. Tavella

Pastor Justin P. Kollmeyer

Pastor John W. Harmon

### 35 Years

Pastor John W. Krueger

Pastor Simon Wing-Shing Lee

Pastor Sandra S. Soye

Pastor Keith H. Eslinger

Pastor Gregory B. Held

Pastor Daniel Hansen

Pastor Don L. Neumann

Pastor Philip Lee

Pastor John Saethre

Pastor Donald M. Brandt

Pastor Pentti J. Maki

Pastor Robert H. Quaintance

Pastor Kenneth A. Comstock

Pastor William Hecht

Pastor David M. Wendel

Pastor Peter V. Gundersen

Pastor Jonathan D. Sorum

Pastor Thomas M. Brodbeck

Pastor Mark H. Braaten

Pastor Matthew Cox

Pastor Preston Bennett Foster

Pastor Gerald Norman Kaskela

Pastor Roy A. Harrisville III

### 30 Years

Pastor Rodney W. Lilley

Pastor Jeffrey David Messner

Pastor Scott W. Baker

Pastor H. Brian Triller

Pastor Daniel W. Selbo

Pastor Jarrod Lanning

Pastor Randall A. Cauble

Pastor Lori J. Hoyum

Pastor John Moffett

Pastor Lewis Samuel Scheiderer

### 25 Years

Pastor Norman J. Sulaica Jr.

Pastor John T. Conrad

Pastor Eric C. Meissner

Pastor Daniel W. Cave

Pastor Sara Ann Gausmann

Pastor Mark A. Kindem

Pastor William C. Heber Jr.

Pastor Kevin Ree

Pastor Thomas J. Hux

Pastor Franz Joseph

Brandenburg

Pastor Steven J. Hartten

Pastor Daniel Hendrickson

### 20 Years

Pastor Roger G. Keller

Pastor Charles H. Lashley

Pastor Jean Rabary

Pastor Dwight John Hanson

Pastor Paul M. Strom

Pastor Timothy Lundeen

Pastor Christopher B. Staley

Pastor Hilbert A. Schultz

Pastor Jeffrey T. Cottingham

Pastor Jeffrey J. Lee

Pastor Rodney Nygren

## Congregational Anniversaries

### 175 Years

Zion Lutheran Church

Stone Creek, Ohio

Christ's Ev. Lutheran Church  
Stanley, N.C.

### 150 Years

St. John Lutheran Church

Monroeville, Ohio

Messiah Lutheran Church  
Lebanon, Pa.

### 125 Years

Holy Trinity Lutheran Church

Little Mountain, S.C.

Grace Lutheran Church  
Erskine, Minn.

Samuel Ev. Lutheran Church  
Eagle Grove, Iowa

Cross Lutheran Church  
Pigeon, Mich.

Bethany Lutheran Church  
Laurens, Iowa



# Holy God, Holy Lives

*Message from Bishop Bradosky at the 2016 NALC Convocation*

*This sermon was preached by Bishop John Bradosky to open the 2016 NALC Convocation. The sermon is based on 1 Peter 1:12-25 and the Convocation theme, "Holy God, Holy Lives."*

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

As Lutherans we are clear and precise regarding our doctrinal understanding of justification. We are saved by grace through faith apart from works. We are also clear that our faith is in the person Jesus Christ. It is Christ who saves, and there is no other means of salvation. The only grace that saves is the grace of Jesus Christ in His cross and resurrection. However, when it comes to the doctrine of sanctification we seem to be far more imprecise. In our preaching, teaching and conversations *Holy God* is mentioned far more frequently than the subject of *Holy Lives*. While Christ is mentioned frequently, the Holy Spirit, not so much!

Can our faith be intellectually strong but spiritually weak? Could we easily fall into antinomianism or end up proclaiming "cheap grace?" Could we have right faith that is absolutely powerless to transform or renew?

In his book, *Divine Conspiracy*, Dallas Willard makes a poignant point in a section titled, "The Gospel of Sin Management." He raises the concern that on both ends of the theological spectrum the Christian message has been reduced to how we deal with sin and wrongdoing. The Christian Gospel is delivered as a means for removing individual sins or removing social or structural evils. Have we reduced the Gospel to the bumper sticker message: "Christians Aren't Perfect, Just Forgiveness!" If you have faith in Jesus Christ you are forgiven, while in every other respect your life is no different than that of those who have no faith in Christ at all.

It is as if the goal of this life is to manage our sin and insure ourselves of forgiveness. The endless



*From the Bishop*

**Bishop John Bradosky**

loop of Christian living is sin, confession, and believing that all debts are paid and our guilt erased. The real payoff for having faith in Christ comes at death, after life. Our life now has no necessary connection with Christ except as it pertains to believing in his forgiveness. Our life becomes as shallow as the bumper sticker — "just forgiven." Of course, there are those who err on the other side of this equation and attempt to achieve holiness by their own works and ways, believing their holiness forces God's hand in declaring their salvation and granting them eternal life, thereby perverting the purity of our justification in Christ alone.

However, between these two extremes there is a path of discipleship. Do we really believe that Jesus is unconcerned about how we live our life in Him? Does repentance and the amendment of life still have any meaning in our understanding of confession and forgiveness? Does abiding in Christ and having Christ abide in us make any difference in our day-to-day living, our being, our values, words and deeds? Does our faith in Christ make any difference in our relationships with our neighbors? Does our faith in Christ make us more Christ-like both in our worldview and our behaviors?

Our own Dietrich Bonhoeffer makes the same point when he writes, "Cheap grace is the preaching of forgiveness without requiring repentance, Baptism without church discipline, Communion without confession, or absolution without personal confession. Cheap grace is grace without

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discipleship, grace without the cross, grace without Jesus Christ, living, and incarnate.”

This pursuit of discipleship is the very nature of the mission Christ gave to His Church and is confirmed throughout the Gospels and in the lives of His followers after Pentecost. That is also the case in our text before us today, the theme for our Convocation: “Holy God, Holy Lives.”

Peter begins by reminding us that we who live on this side of Christ’s crucifixion and resurrection have a special view of the writing of the prophets. They were pointing to Christ, His death, resurrection and His return. What the prophets foretold is now proclaimed in the Gospel. And the apostles who were now proclaiming the fulfillment of the Gospel in Christ’s return were speaking by the same Holy Spirit that inspired the prophets of old. In Christ, the entire redemptive history of God’s people holds together. This Holy Spirit is the Spirit of Christ Jesus. It is so amazingly wonderful that even the angels long to look into these things. This is a connection that spans all time!

God’s commands are always rooted in His grace. The indicative is always the basis of the imperative. What God has done for us in Christ is the basis of how we live our life. Peter exhorts the Church to live a godly life. We are to respond with obedience grounded in the greatness of God’s salvation because we are God’s chosen followers and have an inheritance that no one can take away. The life Peter is guiding the disciples of Jesus to follow in living Holy lives is based on hope — the hope that we already have in Christ and the hope that will be completely fulfilled in Christ’s return. Because of this hope we trust Christ completely for our future. That frees us to live faithfully, obediently.

The indicative is hope then two participles follow. When Peter says, “prepare your minds for action,” the words literally mean “gird up the loins of your minds.” Pull up your robes and start running in the direction of this important focus for living. Perhaps Peter is pointing to God’s command to Israel to get ready for the journey into the Promised Land. Peter knew that the goal of discipleship was journeying with Jesus who is our only hope. To stay focused on this hope requires concentration and



intentionality. His encouragement is to live in this hope as a community of faith and to run out into the world with the mission of proclaiming that hope.

The second participle Peter uses is to be sober, self-controlled. It has nothing to do with drinking. Peter is reminding us that we must avoid being lulled into passivity regarding our faith by the attractions of the world so that we no longer recognize the reality of Christ’s presence and sovereignty in the world. We can become so caught up in our earthly desires that we are drunk with passion for these things and no longer aware of our identity and the mission to which we have been called. We are not to be conformed to the world but conformed to Christ.

Dietrich Bonhoeffer writes, “To be conformed to the image of Christ is not an ideal to be striven after. It is not as though we had to imitate Him as well as we could. We cannot transform ourselves into His image; it is rather the form of Christ which seeks to be formed in us (Galatians 4:19), and to be manifested in us. Christ’s work in us is not finished until He has perfected His own form in us. We must be assimilated to the form of Christ in its entirety, the form of Christ incarnate, crucified and glorified.” (*Cost of Discipleship*, p. 301)

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I think Peter is clearly calling on us to live a holy life now by setting our hope on Christ and His eternal reign. We once lived in conformity with the world and its desires. We lived in ignorance. We lived without this eternal hope, but with it we are to live in a different way. This Christian life is not a passive existence, since worldly desires will always tempt people of faith to depart from following Christ. In resisting these temptations we are to live as children who obediently trust their parents. Peter had no conception of the Christian life and faith in which believers give mere mental assent to doctrines. Rather, faith was translated into living our eternal life beginning right now!

Luther reflecting on the Jesus words in John 6:47, “I tell you the truth, he who believes has everlasting life,” writes, “Here Christ explicitly promises eternal life to the believer. He doesn’t say that if we believe in Him we *will have* eternal life. Rather, he says that as soon as we believe in Him, we *already have* eternal life. He is speaking not of future gifts but of present ones. He is saying if you believe in me you are saved. You already have eternal life.

“This passage is the cornerstone of our justification. With it, we can settle the disputes we’re having about how we receive God’s approval. Good works don’t lead us to heaven or help us in the sight of God. Only faith can do this. Of course, we should do good works and live holy lives in obedience to God. But these efforts won’t help us earn salvation. We already have eternal life. If we don’t receive it while here on earth, we’ll never receive it after we leave. Eternal life must be attained and received in this body.” Through the Word and the work of the Holy Spirit we accept His Word and believe in Him. If we believe in Christ and cling to Him, we are redeemed from both physical and spiritual death. We already have eternal life! In Christ we are connected to His Body on earth and in Heaven.”

Peter is reminding us that we live that eternal life by following Jesus, who is the pattern for holiness. Christ has called you. He alone brings you out of darkness into the light. Just as He creates light where there was darkness, so too He creates life where there was only death.

There are many Christians who think that living a holy life is mission impossible. They simply conclude, “I’m not holy and never will be!” Others don’t want to be holy because they associate it with people who claim to be holy but are only pious, condescending, self-righteousness, judgmental, arrogant, religious and self-serving. Let’s not throw out the word because some people have misused it. Even Jesus criticized those who only pretended to be holy for the sake of impressing others.

Holiness is not a set of rules or guidelines. We are called into a relationship with a Holy God, not a holy set of rules. Whenever we preach or practice a holiness of rules we preach and practice a holiness of works. Holiness is not a spiritual beauty contest in which we list all the good things we have done or promise to do.

Holy in the Hebrew is *hagadosh*. It means to be weird, strange, peculiar, different, set apart for a specific purpose. It is a life that is lived for God’s purposes. It is a life that refuses to be conformed to the rest of the world and is, instead, conformed to Christ. Holy also means to be cleansed, purified and prepared for a special use. In our connection to Christ we are part of His redeeming love that proclaims His Gospel to the world in word and deed, making disciples of all nations. “You shall be holy, for I am holy.” Jesus wants us to be with Him and like Him.

For Luther, justification means that a person possesses “a righteousness not his own, a righteousness not of works, but of faith.” Faith in Jesus Christ means that Christ dwells in the heart and life of the Christian. This is true Christian righteousness. To be holy is to be in Christ and therefore to separate oneself from what is evil. This injunction to holiness embraces all of life (“in all you do”). No sphere of life is outside Christ’s dominion.

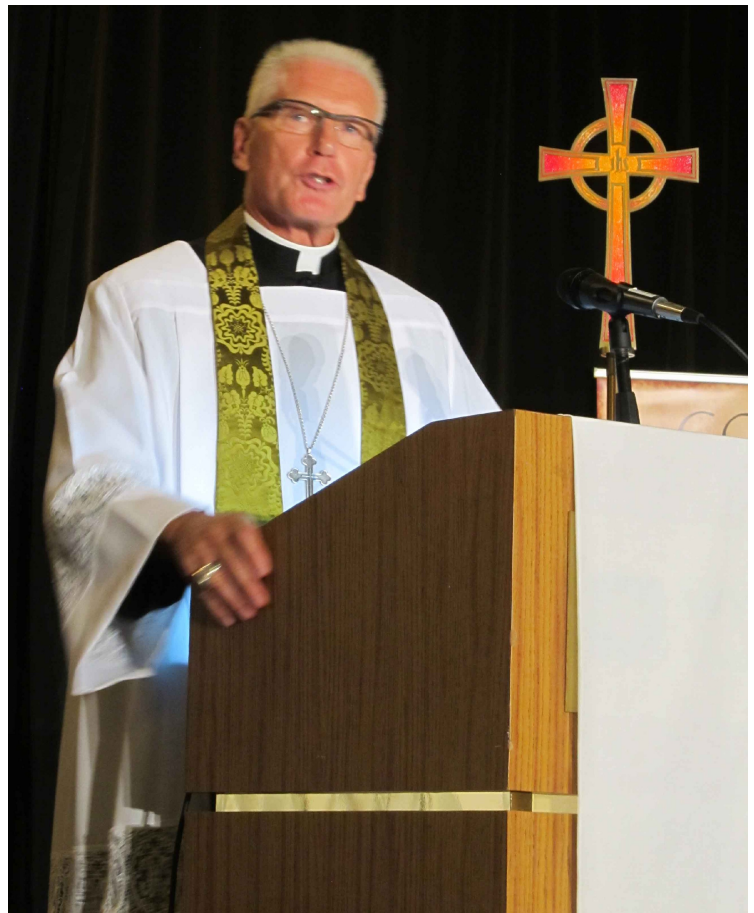
But Peter also reminds us that this is not our home. We live in relationship to Christ, in reverent fear, honor, respect and love, but we are foreigners here. We have left an empty existence apart from Christ and entered the abundant life in Christ, a life that is holy because of Christ. Our justification is a gift. We are brought into a right relationship with God because of what Jesus has already accomplished

for us in His life, sacrificial death on the cross and His glorious resurrection.

Our sanctification is also a gift. It is the work of the Holy Spirit of Jesus that makes me holy. Luther sees the relationship between justification and sanctification as one of cause and effect. He writes, "From the presence of the effect we may assume that the cause is at work." The Holy Spirit dwells in each believer, not helping us to become holy through our work but making us holy by His work. Luther writes, "He dwells in believers, not merely as to His gifts, but as to His substance." The Holy Spirit gives us His person. The Holy Spirit has entered your life!

Peter concludes this portion of his letter by reminding us that our faith rests on the transcendent truth of the Word of the Lord that endures forever. It is through the proclamation of this Word that we came to know Jesus Christ. This seed took root in our hearts and by the power of the Holy Spirit produced faith. We were born again. We received eternal life, a hope that is everlasting. Now we live in that eternal life, free to obey the truth and free to love sincerely and deeply. Luther ties sanctification to the work of the Holy Spirit and the Word. He writes, "God's Word is holy and sanctifies everything it touches; Nay, it is the very holiness of God. (Moreover) the Holy Ghost Himself administers it and anoints and sanctifies the Church."

Sanctification happens in the context of the Church. The Church exists where the Gospel is rightly proclaimed and the Sacraments rightly administered. Where these are, there is the holy Church. Luther believed the Holy Spirit is operative in and through the Sacraments, as well as in and through the Word. There could be no sanctification apart from this function in the life of the Church. In Baptism the Holy Spirit anoints us. In confirmation the Holy Spirit confirms our faith. In ordination the same Holy Spirit is at work, and we promise to live a holy life. Every time we celebrate the Eucharist that same Holy Spirit, through faith, confirms Christ's real presence in the bread and wine of this Sacrament assuring us constantly of our forgiveness and the eternal life we are now living. Disciples are shaped in the ministry of the Church



***Bishop John Bradosky preaches for the opening worship of the 2016 NALC Convocation.***

and move into the world to live lives that accomplish Christ's mission to go and make disciples, leading others to Christ and nurturing them to mature faith in His Body the Church.

This does not detract from our understanding that we are at once, saint and sinner. Luther writes, "The more godly a person is, the more they feel the battle." It is in this daily battle that the Holy Spirit is at work in the process of sanctification. The daily ministry of the Holy Spirit enables the believer to withstand the battle and grow in grace. Luther writes, "The sanctification, once begun, daily increases, (for) the Holy Spirit is continually at work in us, by means of the Word of God, and daily bestowing forgiveness on us, till we reach that life where there is no more forgiveness, all persons there being pure and holy." This ministry of the Holy Spirit comes through reading, studying and meditating on the Word of God and the invocation of Christ. Daily prayer, confession and absolution, reclaiming our baptismal identity and promises, and

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regular worship participation in Holy Communion are all means by which sanctification is accomplished and we live holy lives.

It is this ministry of the Holy Spirit in making us holy that equips us for Christian service. Luther wrote, “The indwelling of Christ, redeems us from the bondage of Egypt (sin), makes us free, gives us power to do good. Just so, no one becomes a bishop by doing the works of a bishop, but after he has been made a bishop, he does the works of a bishop. So the works of faith do not make faith, but faith does the works of faith.” We are freed from the necessity to earn our salvation and freed for the opportunity to love and serve our neighbor. It is this love that faith produces and it must be the nature of our life together in Christian community. Only this holy love can nurture disciples within the Church. This same holy love must be taken into the world so that others may experience the very nature of the holy love Christ has for all people and His desire to be their Lord and Savior. It is this holy love that enables people to hear Christ call, “Follow me!” I encourage you to reinsert these two terms back into our preaching, teaching and conversation, *Holy Spirit* and *Holy Lives*. The first is fundamental to the Church’s existence. The second is essential for the

mission and ministry of the Church. Let us focus on the inseparable nature of both our justification through the person of Christ and our sanctification through the Holy Spirit of Christ. Remember with me Luther’s explanation to the third article of the Apostle’s Creed. Luther writes, “I believe that I cannot by my own reason or strength believe in Jesus Christ, my Lord, or come to Him; but the Holy Spirit has called me by the Gospel, enlightened me with His gifts, sanctified and kept me in the true faith; just as He calls, gathers, enlightens and sanctifies the whole Christian Church on earth and keeps it with Jesus Christ in the one true faith. In this Christian Church He daily and richly forgives me and all believers all our sins; and at the last day He will raise up me and all the dead, and will grant me and all believers in Christ eternal life. This is most certainly true.”

Let the admonition of Peter in the Scripture for this Convocation ring out in our proclamation of the Gospel, “But as He who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct, since it is written, ‘You shall be holy, for I am holy.’”

Holy God, Holy Lives — So may it be.

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

## **NALC provides sample policies for congregations to protect religious liberty**

As promised last year in the wake of the U.S. Supreme Court decision on same-sex marriage, the NALC is providing additional resources to assist congregations. The resources are included in a single document, “Marriage Law and the Protection of Religious Liberty: Implications for Congregational Policies and Practices.” There are four parts to the document:

- + Doctrine on Marriage and Sexuality
- + Employment practices
- + Facilities use policies
- + Policies related to parish schools

The document is available on the NALC website.

## **Missions webinar to follow up on Convocation**

The NALC Missions office is offering a webinar following up on the Convocation and Mission Festival and their themes, “Holy God, Holy Lives” and “Faith Is Made Whole In Community.”

The webinar, “Living and Growing in the Kingdom: Renewing Church” will be offered at 7:30 p.m. EST Thursday, Aug. 25.

In order to be effective and grow as the Church, we need to be clear about the Church’s definition and mission and its implications for our lives and for our church.

To register and for more detailed instructions go to <https://attendee.gotowebinar.com/register/8202022868371012099>





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