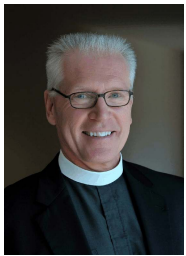


Keeping your eyes fixed on Jesus



From the Bishop

Bishop John Bradosky

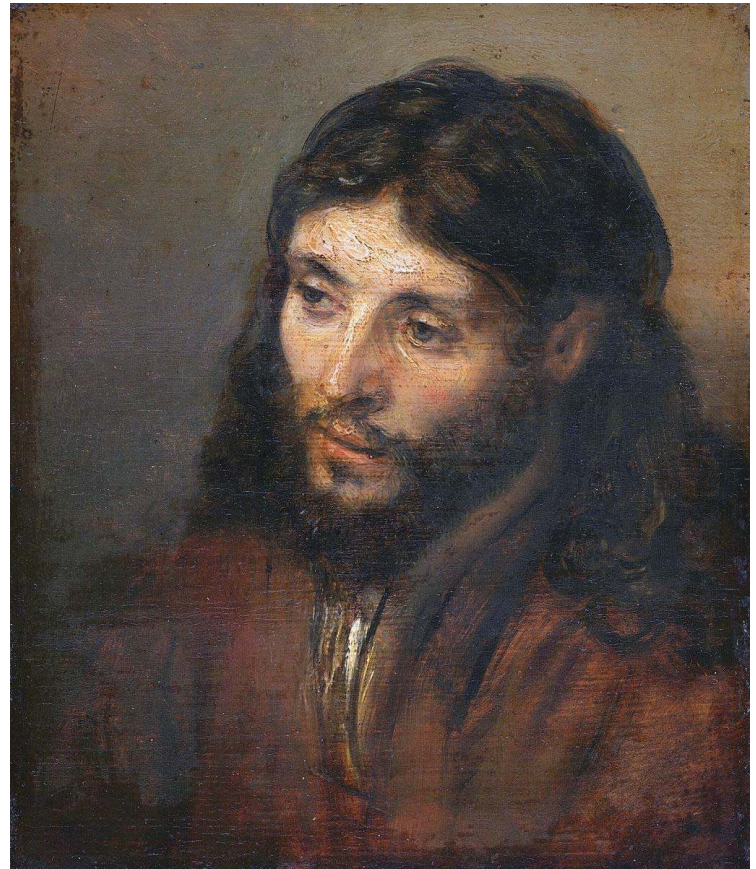
In one of our Gospel texts for the Epiphany season we heard these words from Luke 4:20: “The eyes of everyone in the synagogue were fixed on him.” I share them with you because they are the focus for my Lenten journey.

I am confident you will remember the context of those words from Jesus’ rejection in His hometown of Nazareth. His reputation for preaching, teaching and healing preceded His return. The people of Nazareth want to know more and Jesus reveals more of His identity in the synagogue, reading from the scroll of Isaiah.

“The Spirit of the Lord is on me because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to release the oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor.” He rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the attendant and sat down ready to start preaching. Jesus says, “Today this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing.”

That’s it! In that short passage and few words of explanation, Jesus has told the people of Nazareth and us who He is and the nature of His ministry.

The atmosphere changed sharply. Instead of faith in His words, the people wanted proof. They wanted displays of power and miracles, not just words. Instead of faith in Jesus, there is arrogance, condescension and disbelief. “You are just the son of



Head of Christ by Rembrandt (From Wikimedia)

Joseph.” Jesus uses the Word to remind them you cannot turn the Lord God or His prophets or His Messiah into your personal genie!

Believe in Him, not in His power. Believe in Him, not in your opinion. Believe in Him, not in His miracles. Instead of responding in faith the people became furious and threatened His life.

Unfortunately we live in a world like Nazareth, a world where people base their understanding of Jesus on their private opinions, assumptions and cultural values rather than the transcendent truth

Continued on Page 2

revealed in Scripture. People try to mold and shape Jesus to fit their own passions, understandings, priorities and agendas. However, today most people don't respond to Jesus with such overt outrage. Instead we are more passive in our rejection, but it is for the same reason that those in Nazareth rejected Him. Jesus just didn't fit their expectations. That raises the question, how do we accept Jesus even when he doesn't fit our expectations?

All too often Jesus doesn't fit our expectations because our "eyes" are distracted away from Him to other resources that better fit our expectations. We live in the digital age of so much accessible information that it seems impossible to manage it, let alone process it. Why should we keep our eyes fixed on Jesus when we believe there is more reliable information about life elsewhere? In this information age few examine the dangers of misinformation that is so readily available. It should not surprise us that people are not flocking to become His disciples, His students, when their "eyes" are fixed on other resources for living.

Dallas Willard, a prolific author on discipleship, reminds us in several of his works that the rejection Jesus faced in Nazareth can also be found in the daily lives of multitudes of professing Christians. It is a simple lack of respect. The early Christians had great respect for Jesus, the Gospel, His mission, and following Him as one of His disciples. In Colossians 2:3, Paul tells us that Jesus is the one "in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge." They had faith in Jesus and confidence to "do everything in word or deed, all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks through Him to God the Father." It is not just having faith that saves, but faith in Jesus, the Messiah, the one in whom there is hope, forgiveness, salvation, new life and life eternal. Jesus is the Gospel we proclaim. This is our only hope in facing rejection.

Facing rejection is a universal human experience. This was not the last time Jesus would face rejection. He would face rejection from the religious and political leaders of his own day. Many disciples walked away from Jesus when he talked about eating his body and drinking his blood. He even asked his own apostles if they too were going to leave. Peter responded, "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life." Jesus would face

it repeatedly in his own passion and death. At that point even his most devoted followers fled. This is where our Lenten journey will take us.

Christ did not come to do away with suffering and rejection. He did not come to explain it. He came to fill it with His presence. Christ came to take up human suffering, to wear human suffering as a garment, to identify with human suffering with His total being. All human suffering is a participation in the mystery of Good Friday. Our own suffering and rejection equip us to minister to others even in the darkest hours of feeling abandoned by God when we keep our "eyes" on Jesus.

It is in the context of rejection that we are reminded that we are nothing. Luther suggested that being "nothing" can be a good thing. If we are willing to accept that we are nothing, then Jesus can restore, transform and use us for His purposes. Luther writes: "It is God's nature that he makes something out of nothing. (It is much harder to make something out of something else and far easier to make something out of nothing.) Thus God accepts no one except the abandoned, makes no one healthy except the sick, gives no one sight except the blind, brings no one to life except the dead, makes no one pious except sinners, makes no one wise except the foolish, and in short, has mercy upon no one except the wretched, and gives no one grace except those who have not grace." Even our rejection is an opportunity for the Gospel of Jesus to find a greater place in our lives.

Finally, I leave you with this word from Origen, the church father from the third century. He writes, "Now too, if you want it, your eyes can be fixed on the Savior. ... When you direct the principal power of seeing in your heart to wisdom and truth and to contemplating God's Only-Begotten, your eyes gaze on Jesus. Blessed is that congregation of which Scripture testifies "the eyes of all were fixed on Him!" How much would I wish that this assembly gave such testimony. I wish that the eyes of all (of catechumens and faithful, of women, men and children) — not the eyes of the body, but the eyes of the soul — would gaze upon Jesus. When you look to Him, your faces will be shining from the light of his gaze. You will be able to say, "The light of your face, Lord, has made its mark upon us."

Let us keep our eyes fixed on Jesus throughout this Lenten journey and always.

Registration opens for Convocation

“Holy God, Holy Lives” is the theme of the 2016 NALC Convocation and Mission Festival Aug. 10-12 at the Wyndham Anaheim Garden Grove Hotel in Garden Grove, Calif. The theme is based on 1 Peter 1:16: “You shall be holy, for I am holy.”

The NALC Convocation opens with worship at 1 p.m. on Wednesday, Aug. 10. A Mission Festival will be the focus of the Convocation for most of Wednesday afternoon and Thursday. The Mission Festival is designed to inspire and serve as a resource to congregations. The Convocation is scheduled to conclude at 5 p.m. on Friday.

The Rev. Dr. Malcolm Guite, Chaplain of Girton College of the University of Cambridge, England, is the featured guest speaker for the Convocation.

Dr. Guite describes himself as a poet-priest of the Anglican Church, giving lectures, concerts and poetry readings. He collaborates with musician Steve Bell, who was featured at the 2015 Convocation. The two will blend their unique gifts to highlight the Convocation theme.

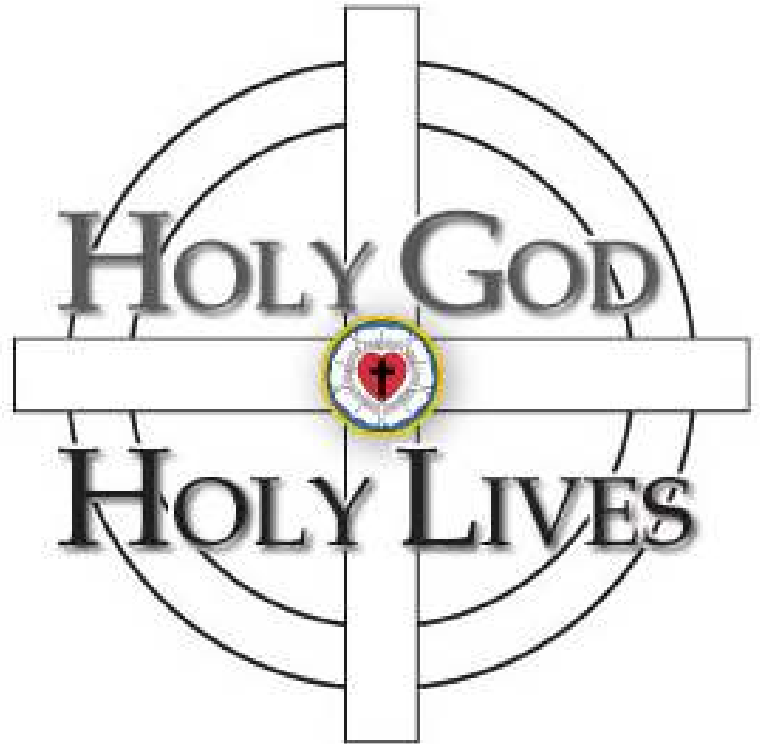
The \$185 registration fee for the Convocation includes Wednesday dinner and lunch on Thursday and Friday.

The Convocation is preceded by the Women of the NALC Annual Gathering and the Carl E. Braaten and Robert D. Benne Lectures in Theology.

The Women of the NALC Annual Gathering will be held on Tuesday, Aug. 9. One delegate from each congregation may vote at the Annual Gathering. Additional congregational members may attend as visitors. The \$75 registration fee includes lunch.

The Carl E. Braaten and Robert D. Benne Lectures in Theology are scheduled for Tuesday afternoon, Aug. 9, and Wednesday morning, Aug. 10. The \$115 registration fee for the lectures includes lunch on Wednesday.

To register or for more information on any of the events during Lutheran Week go to thenalc.org.



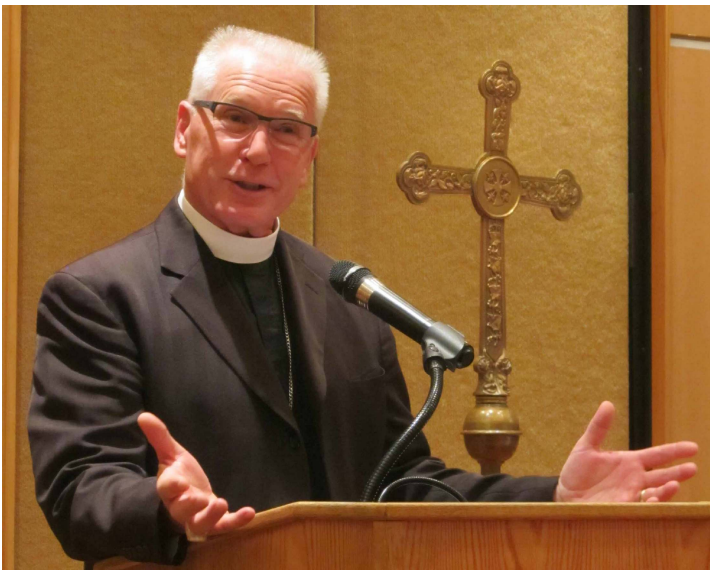
Lectures to focus on Person of Christ

To celebrate the 500th anniversary of the Reformation, the Carl E. Braaten and Robert D. Benne Lectures in Theology will devote the 2016 and 2017 lectures to the Second Article of the Creed.

The Braaten-Benne Lectures will honor the Reformers by reflecting on what was most important to them — the confession of our Lord Jesus Christ. The 2016 lectures will respond to our Lord’s question, “Who do you say that I am?” and reflect on the Church’s answer: “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.”

The Braaten-Benne Lectures, the annual theological conference held prior to the NALC Convocation, are scheduled for Tuesday afternoon, Aug. 9, and Wednesday morning, Aug. 10.

The \$115 registration fee includes lunch on Wednesday. To register or for more information go to thenalc.org.



Bishop John Bradosky spoke to the pastors and answered questions about the ministry of the NALC.

NALC Pastors Conference



Dr. James Nestingen led two sessions reviewing the lectionary Scripture readings for Lent and Easter.



Dr. David Yeago of the North American Lutheran Seminary gave two lectures about theological issues surrounding the ministry of the Church.



Pastors had the opportunity to participate in preaching workshops. Dr. Amy Schiffrin, President of the North American Lutheran Seminary (right) responds to a sermon delivered by Pastor Heidi Holst of Holy Trinity Lutheran Church in Berlin, Pa.

February 2-4 Orlando, Florida



Bishop Paull Spring preached at the closing worship service.



Gary Pecuch of faithwebbing.com led one of the optional workshops at the Pastors Conference. He is serving the NALC as a consultant on youth ministry. NALC congregations have free access to the resources of faithwebbing.com.



The pastors joined in regular times of worship following the daily prayer office.



Bishop John Bradosky presided at the blessing of oil for use in NALC congregations. Pastor David Wendel assisted.

Reformation Sites Tour and Study

A tour and study featuring the sites of the Reformation is planned for July 18-29.

Wittenberg will serve for five nights as base camp for day trips to such significant Luther sites as Eisenach and the Wartburg Castle, Torgau, Halle, and Magdeburg. In addition, there are overnight stays in Prague and Dresden, cities of great beauty and significance to the Reformation.

The tour will be led by Dr. Dale Johnson, Professor of Church History at Erskine Theological Seminary. Dr. Johnson has led a similar trip every summer since 2004.

The cost is \$3,200.00 and includes round trip airfare (departing from Charlotte, N.C.), lodging (based on double occupancy), admission to some museums, and all train passes. Daily breakfasts are also included.

NALC Pastors Rebecca Heber and Cathi Braasch will be taking part in the study tour and are helping to encourage involvement from NALC members. You may contact them for more information. Pastor Rebecca M. M. Heber: 407-333-2087 or w.c.heber@att.net. Pastor Cathi Braasch: 308-991-8613 or prcihb@gmail.com.

Additional information is available on Facebook at facebook.com/ReformationHeritageTour.

You may also contact Dr. Dale Johnson at 864-379-6662 (office) or 864-245-4741 (cell) or by e-mail at djohnson@erskine.edu.

Youth ministry coaching available

The NALC has an agreement with faithwebbing.com to provide congregational youth ministry coaching to NALC congregations.

To get connected, visit faithwebbing.com and fill out the contact form. The site is designed to provide forms, resources, and links for adults who work with children and youth.

You can also connect with Gary and Laurie Pecuch by email at faithwebbing@gmail.com.

Four monthly webinars for congregations are scheduled. All will run from 2 to 3 pm (Eastern Time). The webinars will also be recorded for later viewing. Visit the faithwebbing.com Group Page on nalcnetwork.com for registration details. Or you can send Gary and Laurie an email. Here is the webinar schedule:

Feb. 16 - Faith Webbing Part 1

March 15 - Faith Webbing Part 2

April 19 - Website Tutorial

May 17 - Intro to Outcome-Based Youth Ministry

Congregational ratification process update

NALC congregations have finished voting on several amendments to the NALC constitution that were approved by the 2015 NALC Convocation.

The amendments are all related to a change in the relationship between Lutheran CORE and the NALC. The amendments required a two-thirds majority of the NALC congregations voting by the Feb. 14 deadline.

Even though voting finished on Feb. 14, the results will not be announced until March to allow all congregations to report their decision.

The details of the proposed amendments are available online at thenalc.org/2015-convocation.

Rod Dreher and Peter Leithart to speak at Canadian Rockies Theological Conference

“Relevant or Remnant?” is the theme of the 2016 Canadian Rockies Theological Conference April 5-8 in Canmore, Alberta. Featured speakers are Peter J. Leithart and Rod Dreher.

The 2016 conference, which organizers describe as “A Call to Faith from the Fringes,” will be held at the Coast Canmore Hotel in Canmore, Alberta — just outside of beautiful Banff National Park.

Dr. Leithart is President of Theopolis Institute and an adjunct Senior Fellow of Theology at New St. Andrews College in Moscow, Idaho. He is ordained in the Communion of Reformed Evangelical Churches.

He is the author of many books including *Defending Constantine*, *Against Christianity*, and *Deep Exegesis*. His most recent books are *Gratitude: An Intellectual History*, *Traces of the Trinity*, and *Delivered from the Elements of the World*. He writes a bi-weekly column for the website of the journal *First Things* — firstthings.com. He has published articles in many periodicals, both popular and academic.

Rod Dreher is a senior editor at *The American Conservative* — theamericanconservative.com. He has written and edited for the *New York Post*, *The Dallas Morning News*, *National Review*, and other publications. His commentary has been widely published and broadcast. His books include *How Dante Can Save Your Life*, *The Little Way of Ruthie Leming*, and *Crunchy Cons*.

NALC Pastors Karl Johnsen and Phillip Gagnon, the organizers of the conference, offer this explanation of the conference theme:

For many years Christians of the western world have looked for ways to make ourselves relevant. This has been attempted through changes to liturgy, music, sermons, doctrines, and even the very Gospel of Jesus Christ. We have tried and tried again to be relevant. At our best we do this out of a sincere desire that people would come to faith



Rod Dreher



Peter Leithart

in Jesus Christ. At our worst, we do this in order to increase membership and meet our budgets.

But for the past several decades, despite our attempts to be relevant, the church in the western world has been in steady decline. While there have been local examples of growth and isolated success stories, we cannot deny the fact that the church in North America and Western Europe has in all of its expressions been steadily pushed away from the center, and toward the fringes of society. This has been a cause of anxiety and concern. But still we hear the call to make ourselves relevant, always with the expectation that things are about to turn around.

But what if this does not happen? What if we do not experience (at least in our lifetimes) a great revival? What if it is our lot that we do not get to live out the second Chapter of Acts, but instead find ourselves under the broom tree with Elijah?

Though this may be the case, it need not be a cause of despair. Instead let it be a cause of us to consider how to be faithful in a world that finds us increasingly irrelevant. How might we keep the lamps trimmed and burning until such time as our Lord returns or calls us back from exile?

More information on the theological conference is available on Facebook or on the NALC website.

Multi-National Mission and Leadership Conference is set for April 11-13

By Pastor Gemechis Buba

“You are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God’s own people, in order that you may proclaim the mighty acts of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light. Once you were not a people, but now you are God’s people; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.” — 1 Peter 2:9-10

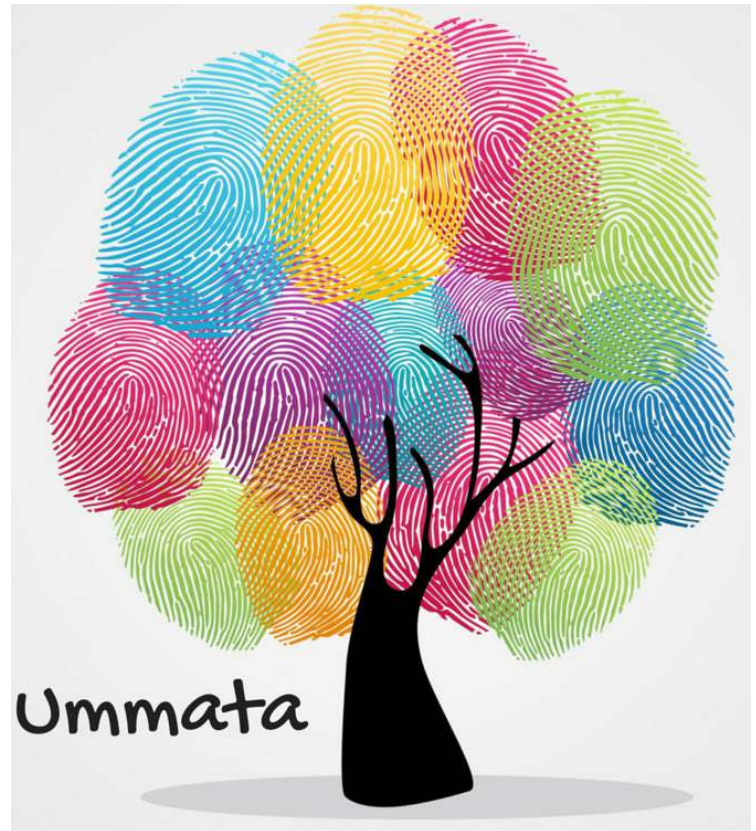
After much prayer, preparation and planning, I am excited to announce the 2016 Multi-National Mission and Leadership Conference taking place April 11-13 in Columbus, Ohio. This two-and-a-half day training conference for multi-national leaders will provide worship, teaching, training, discussion, and prayer centered around the theme “Ummata” — the Oromo word for *community*.

While conference participants come from many different parts of the Body of Christ, we are still one community. For those whose native language is not Oromo, the first time the word is heard, it sounds like: “you matter.”

Unfortunately, in North America, the default position is often “I matter,” while most other world cultures emphasize the posture of making sure others know that “you matter.”

This impactful training event will provide practical tools in key focus areas of identity, leadership, transition, finance and family through the lens of what it means to truly be the Body of Christ, God’s chosen people.

We are blessed to have the Rev. Dr. Brian and Christine Hughes as keynote speakers. The congregation that they serve embodies our core values. With a passion for creating healthy households and healthy churches, Brian and Christine have served in a variety of settings across the United States — from Capitol Hill in Washington, D.C., to Western Pennsylvania to the San Francisco Bay Area of California and now in a bedroom community of Baltimore, Md.



Since meeting one night in Washington, D.C., when they both happened to volunteer at a homeless shelter, they have been deeply committed to helping congregations live out the link between discipleship and mission.

In the last decade their current call has added several mosaic (multi-cultural) ministries, become the primary financial support for an AIDS orphanage in Tanzania, opened its doors to the county's Cold Weather Shelter, provided space for Summer Sensations (the only day camp for children with autism in Maryland), provided space for Safe Harbor (a Christian Counseling Center) and has supported ministries for two elementary schools through their missional communities. Lifting up great leaders, empowering them and getting out of their way is a hallmark of Brian’s leadership style.

Brian is a native Californian with a doctorate in family systems. He has extensive training and

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Theologians Without Borders - *Ummata*

By Pastor Scott Ness

“As you come to Him, a living stone rejected by men but in the sight of God chosen and precious, you yourselves like living stones are being built up as a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.” — 1 Peter 2:4-5

Community in the Streets of Ethiopia

My wife, Deanna, and I just returned from a trip to Ethiopia with the NALC’s “Theologians Without Borders” initiative. I was blessed to teach theology students and grade-school students, and to meet with the leadership of the Ethiopian Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus (EECMY).

We fell in love with the people of Ethiopia.

I am ever so grateful that we were escorted by a driver to all the places we went while in Ethiopia. To say that people drive differently there is an understatement. At first glance, the roads appear to

be filled with chaotic activity. There are few rules that seem to be followed. Some roads have lines on them, but they are ignored. I saw one traffic light, and oddly enough it was not in the city of 3 million.

We traveled from Addis Ababa to Shashamene (similar in distance from Columbus, Ohio, to Morgantown, W.Va.). We shared the road with trucks and donkeys and with buses and horse carts. The whole way we were passing cars similar to the ones shown in the picture. At first glance there were no rules and the only thing keeping things moving was the grace of God.

You Matter

However, as I watched and held my breath, I saw one governing rule that guided all travelers on the road: *Ummata*. The Oromo word for *community* is *ummata*. As my wife heard the word for the first time from the lips of our dear friend, Wada, she heard her say, “you matter.” Perhaps this is the definition of community.

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Driving in Ethiopia is a communal experience. Whether truck drivers or donkeys being driven by kids to go get water, there was a deep sense that everyone was in it together. The Americanized version often portrays that community is a space and place where “I matter.” In Ethiopia, community is the space and place that defaults to the posture of making others know that “you matter.”

On the roadways, there was the consistent noise of horns honking. But unlike traffic jams on Main Street USA, these horns were not slammed on by road raged drivers. These horns were a form of communication. Each beep of the horn was a way to say I need a little more room. Certainly our bus was working toward our destination. But, as our driver led us, there was a sense of understanding that part of his job was to ensure that the other travelers were successful in reaching their destination as well. There was a dependence upon one another. Everyone was headed in their own direction and at their own speed. And yet there was a commitment that we would do this together. Traveling on the road was an experience of *Ummatta*. It was an experience of “You Matter!”

As I drive at home, even defensive driving, I place my trust in traffic laws. I trust that, as I follow them, you will follow them too. I don't think as much about the other drivers. In the void of traffic laws, Ethiopian drivers default to work together in the driving experience. In the first days of my time there, traffic was chaotic and unnerving. As I watched, it became something beautiful.

Partnership and Community

Ummata is the perfect description of the partnership between the NALC and the EECMY. Yoked together, we become far more beautiful. Truly, this partnership is a match made in heaven. What we have, they need. And what they have, we need.

600,000 people were baptized last year. EECMY is growing so fast that it is hard for the leadership to keep up. What the NALC can provide is gifted and skilled leaders, who can train leaders. We have talented, wise, and brilliant people who can gift the EECMY with training and teaching.

But, more importantly, we have so much to learn from our brothers and sisters. The faithfulness and the movement of the Spirit of God among the people in Ethiopia is something that we in the NALC desperately need. The Holy Spirit is moving in Ethiopia. We have a lot to learn about what it means to trust in the Holy Spirit as He moves among us as well.

Pastor Scott Ness serves as associate pastor of St. John's Evangelical Lutheran Church in Grove City, Ohio. He is a member of the NALC's Missions Team and Communications Committee.

Multi-National Mission and Leadership Conference

Continued from Page 8

experience in leadership and conflict management. He is the author of “Our Structure, Carrying out the Vision” as well as numerous articles. Christine hails from Minnesota and is an attorney currently working for Johns Hopkins Medicine, specializing in human relations and religious accommodation in the workplace.

Registration for this event will only be \$25 per person because we feel so passionately that as many of our multi-national leaders attend as possible. All other details are available on the NALC website, including registration, conference and hotel site, ground transportation, and more. Please share the news about this wonderful training event and hold us in prayer as we continue to plan and prepare!

Life Summit is April 2

Dr. George Grant will be the keynote speaker for the Life Summit April 2 at St. Paul's Evangelical Church in St. Louis, Mo. The conference will also include other speakers and a wide variety of workshop opportunities.

The conference is sponsored by Churches for Life. More information on the conference is available at www.getintolife.org.



Lutherans led the 2016 March for Life on Friday, Jan. 22, 2016, in Washington, D.C. Students from Concordia High School in Fort Wayne, Ind., were chosen to lead the 2016 march. (LCMS Photo by Michael Schuermann)

March for Life



NALC members were among those who participated in the 2016 March for Life in Washington, D.C., on Jan. 22.

“Pro-Life and Pro-Woman Go Hand in Hand” was the theme of this year’s march which was smaller than normal because of the blizzard that hit the Washington area.

NALC Pastor Dennis Di Mauro of Trinity Lutheran Church in Warrenton, Va., is pictured above in front of the Supreme Court building. He also spoke at the ecumenical worship service at DAR Constitution Hall which was held prior to the march (photo at left).

What Is a Pastor?

Jesus says, 'Feed and Tend My Sheep'

When they had finished breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter, "Simon, son of John, do you love me more than these?" He said to him, "Yes, Lord; you know that I love you." He said to him, "Feed my lambs." A second time he said to him, "Simon, son of John, do you love me?" He said to him, "Yes, Lord; you know that I love you." He said to him, "Tend my sheep." He said to him the third time, "Simon, son of John, do you love me?" Peter was grieved because he said to him the third time, "Do you love me?" And he said to him, "Lord, you know everything; you know that I love you." Jesus said to him, "Feed my sheep." Truly, truly, I say to you, when you were young, you girded yourself and walked where you would; but when you are old, you will stretch out your hands, and another will gird you and carry you where you do not wish to go." (This he said to show by what death he was to glorify God.) And after this he said to him, "Follow me."

— John 21:15-19

Let's be honest. There is something of a disease in our culture today that has "infected" the pastoral ministry as it has everything else. It is "narcissism." Narcissism is defined as excessive interest in oneself. It is related to vanity, self-admiration, self-absorption, conceit, self-centeredness, egotism. While I don't presume to be a psychologist, it's obvious that narcissist pastors see themselves as the center of the congregation, with everything having to revolve around him or her. There is little desire to involve other leaders, a need to control and not share decision-making, and a tendency to show offense when and if anyone should disagree because "Hey, it's all about me, and what I want and need and desire."

And before lay leaders might nod and conclude, "Yes, that's our pastor — the Narcissist," we also have to be honest and admit that many problems in congregations today are the result, not of narcissistic pastors, but self-centered, egotistical lay leaders who think the church is all about them!



Ministry Matters

Pastor David Wendel

Assistant to the Bishop
for Ministry and Ecumenism

And it doesn't take a psychology degree to see why there might be conflict in congregations where there are both pastor and lay leaders who have narcissistic tendencies!

Although there is an aspect in which the pastor is a central figure in the congregation and is called to preach, teach and lead, this position is entrusted to the pastor when he or she has earned the trust of the congregation. (More on "trust" in next month's "Ministry Matters" article.) The faithful and true pastor never enters the ordained ministry out of an unhealthy desire to be the center of attention or to feed our self-centeredness or egotism. Such a person in the pastoral office diminishes others in the congregation, leaders and members alike. The strategy of a narcissistic pastor will always be: "I must increase, so you must decrease."

This is not to say that pastors ought not be strong, competent leaders — self-assured, self-confident and capable of leading. The goal is not to have mousey, shy pastors who are not confident and allow others to walk all over them. Rather, healthy pastors are not "in it" for themselves, are not "needy," are not always seeking attention to bolster their lack of self-confidence. A healthy pastor is confident and whole as a saved, redeemed child of God, washed in the blood of Christ Jesus, able to serve Christ's Church with a stable, balanced, self-differentiated personality that seeks not to be served, but to serve — Christ and His "flock."

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That seems to be what the Lord is saying to Peter in their encounter at the end of the Gospel of John. Without a doubt, Peter had, at times, been self-focused if not self-centered. Now, Jesus is preparing to ascend and He has a heart-to-heart conversation with Peter, reminding him of the role of the disciple and apostle — to feed and tend the sheep!

Peter's purpose now was not to be the undisputed head of the Church, lording it over the others in Jesus' "absence," taking control as if that was his calling as an apostle. Rather, the Lord tells Peter, "Because I love you and you love me, feed my lambs, tend my sheep, feed my sheep." This is how Peter was to follow Jesus, finally dying a martyr's death as he gave all for his Lord and the Church.

The opposite of being a narcissist is to be unselfish, humble and willing to sacrifice for the sake of others. Being a called, ordained pastor doesn't mean neglecting yourself or your family for the sake of others, but it does mean being prepared to place the needs of others, even others in your family, before yourself and your own wants, desires and agenda.

A wise and trusted retired pastor in my former congregation in Colorado Springs once told me, "What matters is that the sheep are being fed. Everything else comes after that." Isn't that what the Lord is telling us? That the primary thing in ministry is to love the Lord by feeding and caring for His sheep? And not just the sheep who show up for Sunday worship. We are to care for the lost sheep as well. The faithful pastor also cares for the lamb who has gone astray, the sheep who has wandered unwittingly into a dark and dangerous place, the lamb who needs to be uplifted and carried back into the safety of the fold, where there is nourishment in Word and Sacrament, tender loving care within the community.

Before pastors or church leaders point fingers at others in the congregation, declaring, "Narcissist!" the more helpful exercise is to engage in self-reflection and self-examination. The starting place is to ask oneself, "Is this all about me?" "Is this about what I want and need, or about feeding and caring for the flock entrusted to me?" "Is this about

my power and position and how I will look to others, or is this about the health and well-being of the congregation as a whole?" "Is this self-serving or in the service of others?" "Is this about making myself feel better or about building up the Body of Christ?" Ministry and leadership that is narcissistic is all about "me, myself and I." Ministry that is about Christ and His sheep is about being humble, sacrificial and unselfish, confident in who I am as a child of God and servant of the Lord. In the Body of Christ, we all do well to keep that in mind and strive for that as we seek to feed and tend Christ's sheep!

Next Month: Pastors Must Be Found Trustworthy!
(1 Corinthians 4:2)

Lenten devotions from Pastor Wendel are available online

Pastor David Wendel, Assistant to the Bishop for Ministry and Ecumenism has written daily devotions for the Lenten season.

The devotions are based on the daily lectionary in *Lutheran Book of Worship*.

The devotions are formatted for printing in a booklet called "From Ashes to Easter" available for download on the NALC website in regular and large-print formats.

The daily devotions on the NALC website and in the NALC Facebook group during Lent will be the same ones in the booklet.

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

The Lenten devotional material is available as a daily text message or email. To receive the daily text message, please text LENT to 614-333-0334. To sign up to receive the daily email, go to nalcnetwork.com/lenten-devotionals.

Water Mission Sunday is April 24

Each year, churches across the country rally together to bring awareness to the global water crisis and to raise funds to bring relief to those who need it around the world.

Water Mission encourages congregations to join in celebrating Water Sunday on April 24. Water Mission will provide all the resources and supplies you may need to participate in this event: everything from sermon notes, small-group discussion questions, children's activities, posters, and videos. They'll even provide water-bottle wrappers if you'd like to participate in a beverage fast and resources to host a walk for water.

As we reach out to our brothers and sisters who lack clean drinking water, we are able to show them the love and the grace of God. We are called to step into the brokenness and to be God's hands and feet as He reconciles all of Creation.

During a trip to Uganda in January, the Water Mission team visited a community called Busalamu. This project received safe water a year ago thanks to a church in the United States raising funds to move the project forward.

During a meeting with the members of the Safe Water Committee, joy radiated from their faces. One lady, named Sumaya, stood up and shared how three of her daughters were raped and got



pregnant when they used to walk a mile in the dark to collect water from a swampy area.

Now, thanks to the safe water project, her daughters are healthy and safe and she makes some extra money as a tap operator which allows her to better support her family. Sumaya even showed us her skin and proudly exclaimed how it was "shining and beautiful" because they now have accessible water to bathe regularly and because it's safe, they no longer get skin diseases.

Sumaya closed in a posture of thanks, kneeling on the ground, expressing her gratitude. The lives of her family and entire community of nearly 4,000 people have been transformed.

Your participation in Water Sunday is what makes stories like this possible!

We encourage you to join the rally of believers across the country this Water Sunday in an effort to provide clean drinking water and ultimately, the Living Water. Now is the time to make it right.

Visit www.watermission.org/watersunday to learn more and to register your event.

Congregations seeking NALC pastors

Following is the list of congregations seeking NALC pastors. Average worship attendance is listed in parentheses. Full profiles of the congregations are available online on the NALC Network in the Congregational Profiles groups.

NALC pastors interested in being considered should contact Pastor David Wendel, Assistant to the Bishop for Ministry, at 614-777-5709 or dwendel@thenalc.org.

Non-NALC pastors who would like to be considered for these vacancies should contact Pastor Mark Chavez (mchavez@thenalc.org) about entering the NALC certification process prior to contacting Pastor Wendel.

Please be aware the call process is fluid and frequently changing. Updated information is available from Pastor Wendel.

Calgary, Alberta, Faith (60)
Granum, Alberta, Granum (25)
Edmonton, Alberta, Risen Lord (55)
Stettler, Alberta, St. Peter (85)
Fayetteville, Ark., Emmanuel (115)
Arroyo Grande, Calif., St. John's (182)
Benson, Ill., St. Peter (40)
Danforth, Ill., St. John's (55)
Philo, Ill., Zion (40)
Fort Wayne, Ind., St. John's (Lake Township) (215)
Fort Wayne, Ind., St. Mark (80)
Boyden, Iowa, St. John
Ellsworth, Iowa, Trinity (72)

Atlantic City, N.J., St. Andrew by the Sea

Asheboro, N.C., St. John's (104)

Faith, N.C., Faith (119)

Newton, N.C., St. James (120)

Salisbury, N.C., Organ, Associate (210)

Columbus, Ohio, Emmanuel (Independent) (162)

Greenville, Ohio, St. John (112)

Logan, Ohio, St. Matthew (100)

Marysville, Ohio, First English (65)

Thornville, Ohio, Grace (180)

Vickery, Ohio, Good Shepherd (53)

Arona, Pa., St. Mark's (25) and
New Stanton, Pa., St. Paul's (20)

Boerne, Texas, St. John, Senior (385)

Hallettsville, Texas, St. Peter (100)

Roanoke, Va., St. John, Associate (400)

Shiocton, Wis., Ascension (60)

Brookfield, Wis., Calvary (175)

Casper, Wyo., Prince of Peace, Associate (130)

Newcastle, Wyo., Christ the King (102)

Part-Time Positions

Tulare, Calif., First (32)

Clitherall, Minn., Leaf Mountain (25)

Evart, Mich., St. Paul (30)

Middleburgh, N.Y., St. Mark's (50)

Annual Reports to NALC from congregations

NALC congregations are reminded to complete their annual reports to the North American Lutheran Church.

To make this process easier for congregations, the annual report has been divided into two parts.

The first part includes only basic membership and financial statistics. This part has been sent to congregations by email. Contact the NALC Administrative Office at 888-551-7254 or nalc.mnoffice@thenalc.org if your congregation did not receive the report or if you have any questions about how to complete it.

The hope is that by simplifying the report and dividing it into two parts that more congregations will provide the information for the NALC to get accurate membership numbers from all of our congregations.



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