

NALC News

North American Lutheran Church

May 2016

Ten nominated for seminary board

Nine pastors and one lay person have been nominated for the North American Lutheran Seminary Board of Regents. The NALC Nominating Committee announced the nominations on May 13.

The 2016 NALC Convocation Aug. 10-12 in Anaheim, Calif., will elect four members of the seminary board — three members will be elected for six-year terms and one will be elected to a four-year term to fill a vacancy on the board.

Nominated for the six-year terms are: Pastor Cathi Braasch, Elwood, Neb.; Donna Evans, Pittsburgh, Pa.; Pastor Jeffray Greene, Brooks, Ga.; Pastor Kristopher Madsen, Fresno, Calif.; Pastor Dennis A. Meyer, Grayslake, Ill.; Pastor Allen Schoonover, Noblesville, Ind.; and Pastor Kris Snyder, Gonvick, Minn.

Nominated for the four-year term are Bishop Ralph Kempinski, Aiken, S.C.; Pastor Thurmond Plexico, Concord, N.C.; and Bishop Paull Spring, State College, Pa.

Biographical information on the nominees is available as an online supplement to the May NALC News available at thenalc.org/newsletter.



Cathi Braasch



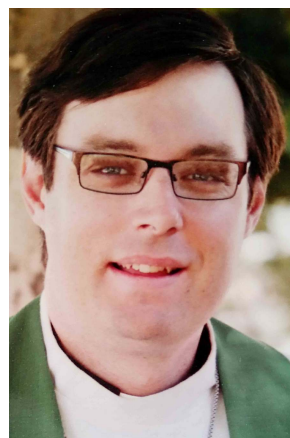
Donna Evans



Jeffray Greene



Ralph Kempinski



Kristopher Madsen



Dennis Meyer



Thurmond Plexico



Allen Schoonover



Kris Snyder



Paull Spring

Nominees for NALC Executive Council

The 2015 NALC Convocation Aug. 10-12 in Anaheim, Calif., will elect one pastor and one lay person to four-year terms on the NALC Executive Council.

Three pastors have been nominated for the Executive Council. As of the May 13 deadline for the Nominating Committee to release biographical information on the nominees, no lay people had been nominated for the Executive Council.



Carl Haynes



Kenneth Kimball



William Maki

Nominated for the clergy position are Pastor Carl Haynes of Christiana Lutheran Church in Salisbury, N.C.; Pastor Kenneth Kimball of Old East and Old West Paint Creek Lutheran Churches of Waterville, Iowa; and Pastor William E. Maki of Zion Lutheran Church in Saint Marys, Ohio.

Pastor David Schafer of Waukon, Iowa, has been nominated for a four-year term on the NALC Court of Adjudication.

Biographical information on the nominees is available as an online supplement to the May NALC News available at thenalc.org/newsletter.

Additional nominations are still possible. Three or more delegates representing at least three congregations may together submit additional nominations. Such nominations must be submitted to the Nominating Committee no later than June 26.

NALC Aging Network webinars

By Pastor Brad Hales

Survey after survey after survey has begun to stir up fear in the hearts of churches across the United States. The amount of “gray hair” that can be found in our pews has become a source of worry for many. As the average age of members increases across denominations, “senior” becomes a byword. Leadership teams, pastors, and church councils begin to ask with increasing fervor: “How do we get more young people in our doors?”

I think we are asking the wrong question.

Please don’t misunderstand. The youth in our church are incredibly important, and it is imperative to share the Gospel with them. Both Gary Pecuch (faithwebbing.com) and I look forward to addressing this topic together.

However, what if we saw this increasing “age” in our congregations as an opportunity for discipleship instead of a negative factor?

Please continue to join us for our ongoing free webinar series that happens the first Thursday of each month at 7.30 p.m. ET to learn, discuss, and prayerfully consider the powerful thing God is doing in our midst! To join the next webinar on Thursday, June 2, by video or conference call (audio only), please visit: <https://attendee.gotowebinar.com/rt/523803314754411266>.

For more information, handouts, links to previous webinars, and for discussion on this important topic please visit the group named “The North American Lutheran Church Aging Network” in the community portion of the NALC Network. You can join the NALC Network at www.nalcnetwork.com.

Seminary Month calls for NALS support

This spring five students will graduate from the North American Lutheran Seminary and will soon be seeking calls for ministry within the North American Lutheran Church.

What a great occasion graduation is for them and for the Church, and how important theological education is for us in the North American Lutheran Church. It is no accident that one of the first acts we took after the formation of our church was to develop a seminary — the North American Lutheran Seminary.

Since its beginning, the seminary has been the recipient of generous support from many people in the church. The NALS Board of Regents and the NALC Executive Council are deeply grateful for the generosity that has been demonstrated.

The need for ongoing gifts for our seminary continues. A particular issue is to provide scholarship aid for our seminarians. In



The Rev. Dr. Amy Schiffrin, President of the North American Lutheran Seminary, teaching a class at the seminary.

response to this need, the Executive Council has declared May to be “Seminary Month.”

The hope is that all NALC congregations will receive special offerings during the Sundays of May for the NALS — both for our ongoing general seminary fund and especially for scholarship aid for our students. A bulletin insert for use in your congregation was sent to congregations and is available on the NALC website.

We know the urgency of the need. We also know how much the seminary means for our church. We depend on the seminary to provide a cadre of leaders for our congregations who are solidly rooted in the Bible and the Lutheran Confessions.

We invite and encourage all our congregations to participate in this year’s “Seminary Month.” We expect that every year the month of May will become “Seminary Month.” We look forward to receiving generous gifts this May from our congregations and members.

Gifts for this year’s Seminary Month may be given online at www.thenalc.org or sent to: NALC Theological Education Fund, 2299 Palmer Drive, Suite 220; New Brighton, MN 55112-2202. Please note NALS on the memo line.



Dr. David Yeago, Professor of Systematic Theology and Ethics, teaching at the seminary.

‘Holy God, Holy Lives’ is theme for 2016 NALC 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 Anaheim, 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 1:30 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 Convocation is the annual gathering and business meeting of the NALC. The Convocation will elect members of the Executive Council, Court of Adjudication, and North American Seminary Board of Regents. The Convocation will also receive financial reports and approve budgets for 2017.

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 NALC 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, from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. 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.

Hotel rooms are available for a discounted rate of \$163.55 per night (includes taxes and fees).

Discounted rates for SuperShuttle from the John Wayne Orange County airport (SNA), the Long Beach (LGB) airport and the Los Angeles airport (LAX) are available. Round-trip shuttle cost from the John Wayne Orange County airport (the nearest airport) to the hotel is about \$20.

To register or for hotel or shuttle discount codes or other information on any of the events during Lutheran Week go to thenalc.org and click on the registration link.

Lectures to focus on Person of Christ

To celebrate the Reformation, the annual Carl E. Braaten and Robert D. Benne Lectures in Theology will devote the 2016 lecture series to the Second Article of the Creed. The annual theological conference, held prior to the NALC Convocation, is scheduled for Aug. 9-10 in Anaheim, Calif.

The 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."

Dr. Carl E. Braaten is among the speakers for the NALC's annual lecture series named in his honor. Other speakers include Dr. Phillip Cary, Dr. Wesley Hill, Dr. Mickey L. Mattox, and Dr. Michael Pasquarello III.

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

The titles of the lectures and the speakers are:

"Revisiting Bonhoeffer's Question: Who is Jesus Christ for us today?" - Dr. Carl E. Braaten, one of the leading theologians in the Lutheran Church for the past 50 years. He has authored and edited numerous books, journals and papers. He taught at the Lutheran School of Theology in Chicago for many years. He later founded the Center for Catholic and Evangelical Theology.

"The Form of Christ in us: Christ and the Christian Life" - Dr. Phillip Cary, Professor of Philosophy at Eastern University in St. Davids, Pa. He earned his doctorate and master's degrees from Yale University. He is the author of four books on the theology of St. Augustine.

"Admirable Conjunctions: The Person of Christ in Philippians 2:5-11" - Dr. Wesley Hill, Assistant Professor of Biblical Studies at Trinity School for Ministry in Ambridge, Pa. Dr. Hill is a graduate of Wheaton College and Bethlehem College and



Carl E. Braaten



Phillip Cary



Wesley Hill



Mickey L. Mattox



Michael Pasquarello

Seminary. He earned master's and doctoral degrees from Durham University in Durham, England. Dr. Hill is the author of three books.

"Christ the Center of Everyday Life: Lessons from Luther's Genesis Lectures" - Dr. Mickey L. Mattox, Professor of Historical Theology at Marquette University in Milwaukee, Wis. He earned his doctorate at Duke University and holds master's degrees from both Trinity Evangelical Divinity School and Simon Greenleaf School of Law.

"Confessing Christ in the Preaching of the Fathers" - Dr. Michael Pasquarello III, the Lloyd John Ogilvie Professor of Preaching at Fuller Theological Seminary in Pasadena, Calif. He earned a doctorate and a master's degree in the history of Christianity from The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. He earned his M.Div. from Duke Divinity School. He is the author of several books on preaching.

Speaking on discipleship in Slovakia

Dear Disciples of Jesus in the North American Lutheran Church:

Earlier this month I was a keynote speaker, workshop leader, and preacher for worship at the annual Missionary Conference in Slovakia. This conference is sponsored by EVS, Slovakia Evangelistic Mission. These are fellow Lutherans working for transformation and renewal in the Lutheran Church in Slovakia. Their offices in Presov are in the same building as the office of one of the three Lutheran bishops.

Their work includes a variety of events and ministry tools to encourage and strengthen the church's passion for mission, for sharing the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Their focus is on youth ministry, prison ministry, Bible Study, mission conferences, training events, concerts, publications, and a dynamic online presence with daily devotions, blogs and



Stage at mission conference in Slovakia.



From the Bishop

Bishop John Bradosky

many other tools for helping Christians mature in the faith and become bold in sharing their faith with others.

The theme for this year's conference was "Thirsty No More." The two Scripture texts that were the focus for our presentations were Jeremiah 2:13 and John 4:14.

These were great opportunities to discuss discipleship and to share our focus in the NALC. They are distinctly aware that the culture within the Church has to change in order to become more effective in equipping people to share their faith with others, following Jesus as His disciples.

They titled my workshop on changing culture: "How to Move an Ocean." During that presentation I confessed that I wanted to respond to the question by saying, "We move an ocean one drop at a time." However, I decided to begin my comments by saying, "Jesus never called us to move an ocean, he called us to make disciples." It is only because so many have abandoned the central mission of the church for such an extended period of time that it now appears that for transformation to occur we will have to "move an ocean." If making disciples seemed like mission impossible, then moving an ocean is even more challenging.

My presentation helped participants focus on what they could do in their own lives and in their lives together as a congregation to begin to implement discipleship. If the 600-800 people who were present for various parts of the conference would begin to disciple one or two people, think of the difference it would make.

Continued on Page 7

I encouraged participants to recognize that these changes can only begin with them. It is not some other person's responsibility to create a mission-minded congregation in which they can be involved. Each disciple is called to be accountable and responsible for living faithfully as a follower of Jesus and encouraging others to share in that same responsibility. This is the nature of our life together.

There were many emotional responses about the difficulties the church is facing in Slovakia. So I also reminded them that, "Emotion is no substitute for action and action is no substitute for production or bearing fruit, making disciples."

I was honored to be with such a passionate and faithful group of people who have committed themselves to mission and are praying for the Holy Spirit to guide and lead them in ways that will strengthen the church in Slovakia and throughout the world.

Other presenters came from England, Poland, and Germany. They also spoke with great passion and insight regarding the texts and the theme.

In addition to the conference, a reporter for the Lutheran magazine in Slovakia interviewed me. I recorded several video presentations on a host of subjects, and spent time talking with Bishop Sabol of the western district. He helped me to understand the challenges of rebuilding the church after being freed from Communist control. Newfound freedom without responsibility and accountability can be just as dangerous as the complete domination of Communism. He also expressed great concern for the influence of the West regarding the promotion of social agendas as "gospel." The oppression of students at their seminary who hold a more traditional understanding has already started.

In addition, ministries such as senior centers, orphanages, caring for the poor and providing other outreach ministries to meet the needs of people



NALC Bishop John Bradosky with Bishop Slavomír Sabol of the Evangelical Church of the Augsburg Confession in Slovakia.

have to be completely redeveloped. Facilities and programs were taken over by the Communist regime. Now that they have a democratic government, the church is trying to reestablish ministries that are now desperately needed. To begin again is a huge stewardship challenge especially when congregations must care for buildings that have been neglected for decades and pay the salaries of the pastors. (The government had paid the pastors so that the government could maintain control over the content of their training, preaching and teaching.)

EVS has been working with the church since the mid-1990s. As their work and efforts continue to grow and expand it is also bearing fruit within the Lutheran Church in Slovakia. It is increasingly clear that the Holy Spirit is at work in a variety of places throughout the world renewing the Church for the sake of its mission and witness to the world.

It was an honor, privilege and joy to represent you in Slovakia. They asked only that I invite you to pray for them and continue to build a relationship that is encouraging and supportive of the work they are already doing.

To that end I invite you to remember them in prayer as we celebrate Pentecost.

Multi-National Mission and Leadership Conference

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

For those whose native language is not Oromo, the first time the word *umatta* is heard, it sounds like “you matter.” Unfortunately, the default position in the United States is often “I matter,” while most other world cultures emphasize making sure others know “you matter.”

We were blessed to host our Multi-National Mission and Leadership Conference: “Ummata” in Columbus, Ohio, April 11-13. It was an impactful training event that provided practical tools in key focus areas of identity, leadership, transition, finance and family through the lens of what it



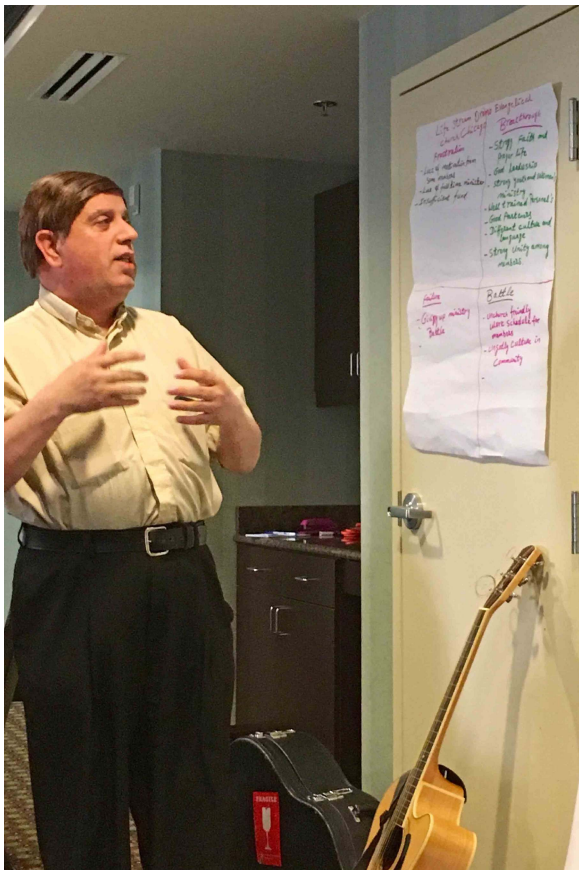
Kansa Deressa presented on behalf of Oromo Evangelical Church in Columbus, Ohio.



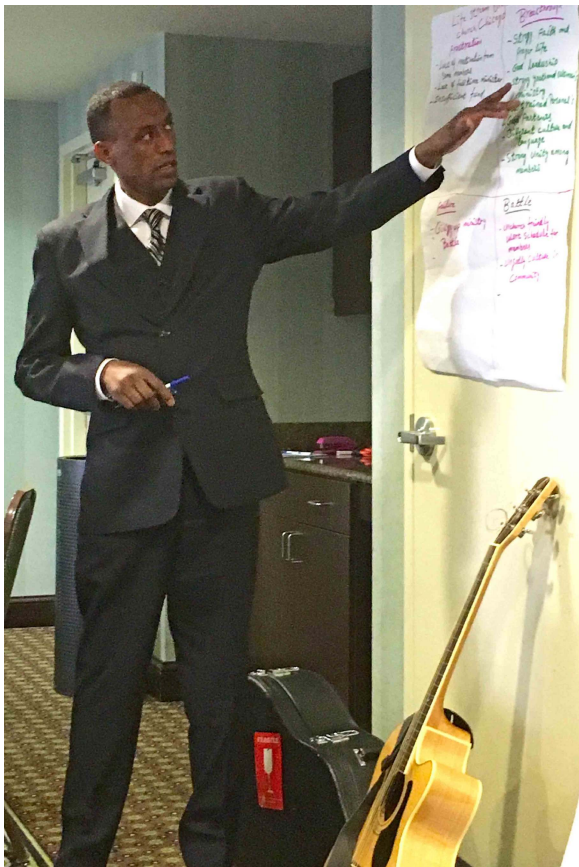
means to truly be the Body of Christ, God’s chosen people.

We were blessed to have the Rev. Dr. Brian Hughes as the keynote speaker. The congregation that he and his wife 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.

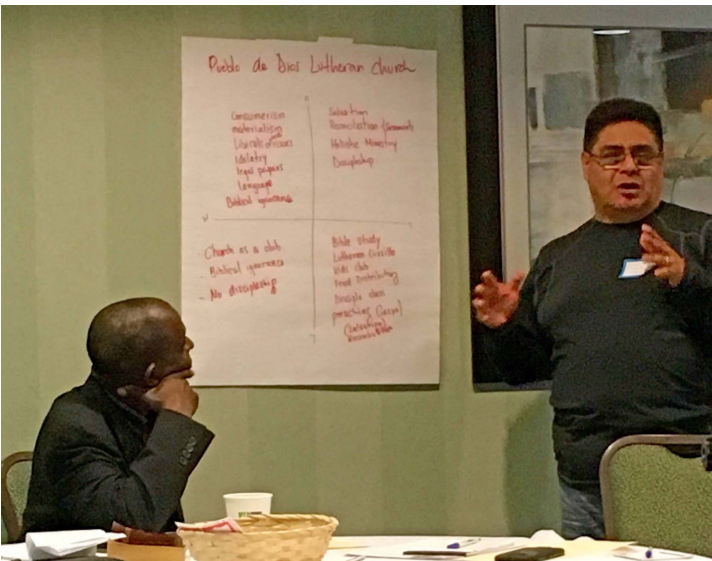
Hearing the stories of these passionate leaders — their dreams and visions for the future, and how the Word of God is powerfully working in their and our midst — was an incredible blessing. As the weeks continue, we will share more of their individual stories. My prayer is that these stories will be an inspiration to you, as they have been to me.



Pastor Rimon Said explained the ministry of St. Elias Church in Chicago.



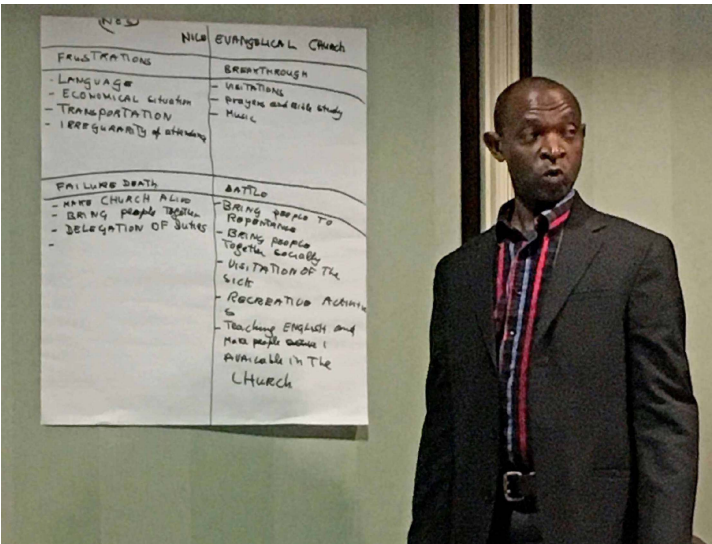
Hafte Ejeta spoke about Lifestream Oromo Church in Chicago.



Pastor Samuel Nieva told about the work of Pueblo de Dios Lutheran Church in Compton, Calif.



Pastors Carlos Adrianzen, Pedro Portillo, Jose Galvez and Juan Portillo (not pictured) led morning worship.



Pastor NTahombaye Nestory shared the story of Nile Lutheran Church in Rochester, New York.

Update on Pastor Didi Panzo's work in Democratic Republic of the Congo

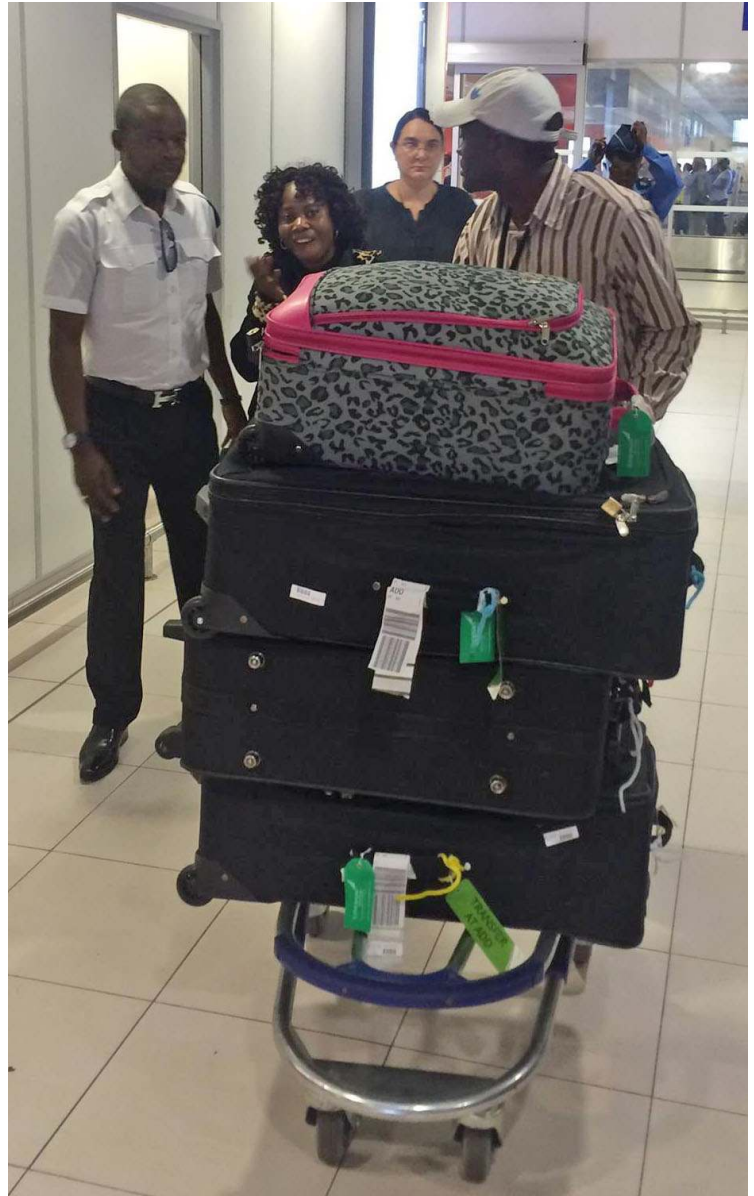
By Pastor Didi Panzo

It was 11:15 a.m. on Feb. 28 when the Ethiopian Airlines plane landed at Ndjili airport in the capital city of Kinshasa, where we were waiting for my wife Serafina's arrival. People began to come out and she wasn't yet there and my heart began to wonder — thinking that she missed her plane or some other inconvenience may have happened. It is not easy to be cleared at Ndjili airport because of bureaucracy and corruption.

Finally we saw her coming, being helped by the airport police as she says, "I am OK now, everything is done." It was a wonderful moment of connection and togetherness as I felt that I am complete again after two months of settling and planning for her arrival. The CCDN team also welcomed Serafina with enthusiasm. Thank you so much for your thoughts and prayers for safe travel.

Three Month Update

On March 13 we had our first organizational meeting with some key leaders in town. Serafina and I explained why we were sent as missionaries to the DRC and also explained to them the crucial work that is involved in helping families regain their moral, cultural and spiritual values, as we can connect all our concerns to God.



Serafina Panzo arrives in the Democratic Republic of the Congo to join her husband, NALC Pastor Didi Panzo.

We described in short what we did in Ecuador and the results that were obtained. The concerns are well known to those who attended the meeting but expressed their ignorance in matters. We encouraged the audience not to neglect the program but on the contrary to serve all as God's voices to the voiceless. Our next meeting will be on

Continued on Page 11

Continued from Page 10

April 17 when we will be planning the first activists training that will happen around the month of June. The need of saving and strengthening families is great but requires lots of prayers.

Political Crisis in the DRC

As the time of election is approaching, lots of political tensions are facing the population of the DRC, and we don't know what will happen by the end of the year. People are gathered in groups arguing with each other and projecting what is uncertain for the future of the country. The cost of living is very expensive, but the salaries for workers are low. The younger generation (from 10 to 20 years old) is engaged in vandalism, robbery and assassination. Prostitution of teenagers is considered as normal. Drunkenness and domestic violence are frequent. Orphans are in need of help and a huge number of them spend their lives on the streets. Five of them knocked on my door one morning in need of food, and we were able to provide as we could. The country seems in the dark and it is in need of Jesus' light.



Prayer Requests

Pray for the abandoned children.
Pray for the DRC economy.
Pray with us for God's provision.
Pray for women in domestic violence.
Pray for our safety.

For more information or to provide direct support to the Panzo Family who are serving through the NALC and the World Mission Prayer League please visit: <http://thenalc.org/global-workers>.

NALC Network blog to feature mission updates from the road

By Pastor Gemechis Buba

The last several weeks have been filled with abundant blessings. The NALC's Executive Council Meeting in Oklahoma, gathering in Atlanta for multiple days of teaching and preaching, and having the opportunity to meet with our brothers and sisters near San Antonio, Texas, was quite an adventure! We were also hard at work in Minneapolis. We had the great opportunity to meet with our partners at World Mission Prayer League, lead worship, meet with key leaders, and preach at Ebenezer Lutheran Church.

The NALC is truly a church that is Mission Driven. Prayer is a critical tool for us as we continue to move forward, sharing the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

We ask that you would join us and lift up prayers as missionaries continue to be sent out, churches are being renewed, new congregations are being formed, and we continue to intentionally focus on discipleship. To assist us in sharing these critical prayer requests, the testimony of what God is doing, and to move forward as a denomination — the Mission Office now has a blog that I will be updating weekly with this information. You can see teaching videos, photos, stories and more: <http://nalcnetwork.com/blogs>

Please continue to hold us in prayer as we are departing for an extended period of ministry in Ethiopia. Additional updates will be coming soon. And may God continue to bless you in the mighty Name of Jesus Christ our Lord.

Maintaining Unity

What is a Pastor and What is Pastoral Leadership?

“I therefore, a prisoner for the Lord, beg you to lead a life worthy of the calling to which you have been called, with all lowliness and meekness, with patience, forbearing one another in love, eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.” — Ephesians 4:1-3

Perhaps one of the most misunderstood and neglected aspects of leadership within congregations is that of maintaining unity. Although this is, or should be, one of the primary tasks of the pastor, he or she cannot create and maintain unity alone. It is the work of the leadership team as a whole — pastor, congregational officers and council. Indeed, the NALC model constitution, article 12.04.f states one of the responsibilities of the council is:

To promote a congregational climate of peace and goodwill, and, as differences and conflicts arise, to foster resolution of such conflicts according to Biblical principles.

In 1986, after five years in my first congregation, I was asked by my bishop to consider being called to a congregation in Colorado Springs which had been conflicted for 15 years (they were only in existence for 15 years!). After accepting the call and beginning our ministry together at this troubled church, many folks were baffled that in spite of the many visitors who showed up for worship each week, they rarely returned and the congregation rarely welcomed new members. I was baffled that our congregational leaders couldn't see the simple fact that visitors don't want to join a congregation that is conflicted! One Sunday morning visit was enough to sense the tension, pain and hurt present in the congregation.

Thankfully, the climate changed and growth began to happen. But this experience impressed upon me the reality that one of the greatest hindrances to evangelism, mission and growth within any congregation is conflict and disharmony within the body.



Ministry Matters

Pastor David Wendel

Assistant to the Bishop
for Ministry and Ecumenism

Whether the conflict and tension is between the pastor and council, members of the leadership team, or rank and file members of the congregation, lack of unity and harmony within a congregation drives folks away, and keeps new folks from wanting to come and participate. It is Job Number 1 for all congregational leaders — pastor and council — “to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.” To do so, it is important to understand what unity is not.

Unity in the Body of Christ is not the lack of conflict or disagreement. Many in our congregations mistakenly believe that peace comes from never disagreeing about things. Some will actively seek to silence or quell any difference of opinion, fearful that leadership will not be able to handle or manage conflict, bringing about negative consequences.

The truth of the matter is that negative consequences arise when conflict and disagreement are not handled openly and positively for the good of the whole. The more a pastor or council tries to silence and suppress any disagreement, the more it will often fester and grow until it becomes an open sore in the body, making healing more difficult.

Addressing conflict openly and directly allows for involved parties to be heard and to hear, to have conversation, plan a positive course and foster healing.

What will this look like in the congregation?

Continued on Page 13

1. Direct, open, honest communication within the congregation, with no anonymous communications or criticisms, no triangulation, no secret meetings. The pastor and council set the tone for this kind of communication by the nature of their own relationships and dealings with one another.

2. Seeking no agenda other than that which is faithful to the Lord Jesus Christ, obedient to God's Word and serves the well-being of the whole congregation. Pushing personal agendas, wishes, wants and desires are not the chief aim of the pastor or council (or members, for that matter).

3. Build consensus within the leadership and the congregation as a whole. When the congregational leadership team informs the congregation, communicates openly and regularly and makes decisions only when there is a consensus, trust develops and unity grows. Although congregational constitutions usually provide for "majority rules" decision-making, this results in "winners" and "losers" — factions and division within the congregation. Rarely is any decision so pressing that congregational leadership must act before informing, communicating with and building consensus within the congregation as a whole. It is important to note, however, that all must understand consensus-building is not about "getting what I want," but acknowledging that what I want may not be what is best for the congregation. Although we never will compromise with regard to the Word of God, living together in community always requires sacrifice and compromise. This is how we arrive at consensus and unity around decision-making.

4. Live the Scriptures! As it says in the model constitution, *as differences and conflicts arise ... foster resolution of such conflicts according to Biblical principles*. One of the most useful strategies

for handling conflict and difficulty within congregations is to heed the guidance of our Lord in the Gospel of Matthew 18:15-20. Here Jesus suggests how believers can be reconciled one to another in a godly, loving manner. Sadly, many Lutherans are not aware of these teachings of our Lord and seek to handle conflict and disagreement according to the ways of the world, using gossip, back-biting and under-handedness, rather than straightforward, open, honest communication, offered in love.

So finally, to live the Scriptures in our daily lives and in the community of the Church, we need to:

5. Know the Scriptures! How can we live God's Word if we don't know it? In the last generation or two, many Lutherans have become functionally illiterate when it comes to the Bible. To foster and maintain unity, harmony and peace within the Body of Christ, we will want to again become people of the Word of God. We will want to again learn what it means and how it is to be God's people within the Church and within the local congregation.

This is how we may begin "to lead lives worthy of the calling to which you have been called, with all lowliness and meekness, with patience, forbearing one another in love, eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace."

NALC congregations seeking pastors

The updated list of NALC congregations seeking to call pastors is available online at <http://thenalc.org/pastoral-vacancies>.

The online list is updated each month.



CHRISTIAN FORMATION IN A POST-CHRISTIAN WORLD
2016 Ancient Evangelical Future Conference

PETER LEITHART | MICHAEL GORMAN | D H WILLIAMS
GREG PETERS | JULIA-MARIE HALDERMAN

Trinity School for Ministry | Ambridge, PA | June 9-10

Encouraging Biblical Devotions

I have a suggestion for one way we might acknowledge and celebrate the upcoming 500th anniversary of the start of the Protestant Reformation. We should evaluate the role of Scripture in both our personal lives and in the lives of our congregational members.

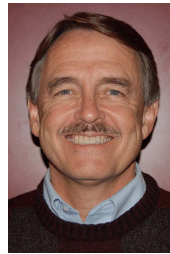
Martin Luther's emphasis on *Sola Scriptura* (Scripture alone) should be an encouragement for pastors and lay leaders to constantly seek ways to motivate their congregations not only in the *study* of God's Word, but also in a daily devotional discipline that includes *reflecting and meditating* on that Word.

Most of us have been aware of the declining influence of the Bible and its teachings among mainline Protestants. This is also the trend we see among the general North American population. A 2014 Barna study discovered that the number of Americans who believe the Bible is "just another book of teachings written by men that contains stories and advice" has almost doubled, from 10 percent to 19 percent in three years. And then there is the decline in the number of Americans *reading* the Bible. According to Gallup polls, 73 percent indicated they were reading the Bible in the 1980s. That dropped to 59 percent by 2000. The percentage is undoubtedly far lower today.

I concur with Doug Lockhart, who is involved in Bible publishing and was quoted in *Leadership* magazine. "For over 200 years, we have provided millions of people with access to the Bible. But that's no longer enough, given the crisis in Bible reading. We need to help people absorb God's Word, so they can live transformed."

The term used by Phil Collins of Taylor University is "Scriptural engagement." The Wycliffe organization defines "Scriptural engagement" as "facilitating life-changing encounters with God through His Word."

The book *Move: What 1,000 Churches Reveal about Spiritual Growth* was based on a survey of 250,000 people. This study concluded that no single factor had a greater impact on an individual's spiritual growth than reflecting on God's written



In Pursuit of the Great Commission

Pastor Don Brandt

Word. Collins explains the desired goal in this particular emphasis: "We come to the Word of God to *know* God, not just to get content."

J.R. Briggs is a pastor in Philadelphia. His shorthand suggestion for his congregation's "engagement" with Scripture is to answer the following questions: "What? So what? Now what?"

In the congregation I serve, I have been advocating for a particular devotional structure that has been very meaningful for me personally. It's not that there is any one structure that is appropriate for all people. However, I feel that when you suggest multiple devotional "routines" you actually reduce the number of people who will respond to the idea of committing to a daily discipline. I believe the following structure is very accessible and realistic for even those who are living extremely busy lives. I came across this structure in the Navigator devotional series *High Quest* (www.highquest.info). Here it is, as they say, "in a nutshell":

1. Read a pre-selected Scripture text of between four and 18 verses for each day. (I provide these for my congregation.)
2. Select one or two verses from this text that you find particularly meaningful.
3. Write those one or two verses down word-for-word. (I suggest our people purchase a journaling notebook — with blank, lined pages — for this step and the following step.)
4. Reflect on these one or two verses by journaling.

Continued on Page 15

5. Conclude your devotional time with prayer. The above structure is suggested as a daily devotional time — at least five days each week. The average time involved each day using this structure is between 10 and 20 minutes.

The challenges in motivating your congregational members to engage in a devotional discipline are probably self-evident. How can you provide accountability? What practical suggestions — such as finding a time and place for private devotions — can we offer? How can we model a devotional life, encouraging our people to not give up? All important questions, and the answers might vary depending on your ministry context. Also, is there a way to affirm this personal devotional discipline by bringing the suggested Scripture texts into your congregation's worship and/or group life?

Consider whether your congregation might benefit from an intentional ministry initiative to motivate and inspire your members to spend time each day reflecting and meditating on Scripture. Feel free to email me if you have any questions.

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

NALC responding to Canadian wildfires

The North American Lutheran Church is responding to the wildfires in northern Alberta. The fires have forced 88,000 people from their homes and destroyed more than 2,400 homes and other structures in and around Fort McMurray.

NALC Disaster Response has sent funds to the Canadian Mission District to assist in responding to those affected by the disaster.

Gifts to support NALC Disaster Response may be given online at thenalc.org or sent to 2299 Palmer Drive, Suite 220; New Brighton, MN 55112-2202. You may designate your gift for the Canadian fires by noting it on your check.



The North American Lutheran Church has entered into an agreement with faithwebbing.com to provide children's, youth, and family ministry coaching for NALC congregations.

Four webinars have been posted on the faithwebbing.com site and three more pages went live in the last month. One for "moms," one for "dads," and one for reviews of movies, TV shows, music, books, and video games.

Join us Tuesday, May 17, at 2 p.m. ET for a free webinar on "Outcome Based Youth Ministry."

Outcome Based Youth Ministry is a long-term strategic design for equipping children and youth with the necessary faith skills to live out their personal calling in life. It fulfills the Biblical mandate of church leaders found in Ephesians 4:12-13 to equip its members to do the work of the church and build up the body of Christ.

Gary and Laurie Pecuch of faithwebbing.com have developed a list of over 30 faith skills that they intentionally build into young people. The intention is to partner with parents to develop a personal ministry plan specifically designed for their child that spans the spectrum of ages from preschool through high school and beyond. This personal growth plan is a tool used to define the essential assets needed to love Jesus, gain self-awareness, serve others, and glorify God.

Please click this link for more information or to register for the webinar:
<https://attendee.gotowebinar.com/register/7513253597433889794>

For more information regarding faithwebbing.com youth and family ministry in the NALC, please contact faithwebbing@gmail.com. To gain access to the members only section fill out the contact form at faithwebbing.com.



NONPROFIT ORG.
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
TWIN CITIES, MN
PERMIT NO. 7007

2299 Palmer Drive, Suite 220
New Brighton, MN 55112-2202

Christ Centered + Mission Driven + Traditionally Grounded + Congregationally Focused

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 Lutheran Seminary

The Rev. Dr. Amy Schiffrin
311 11th Street
Ambridge, PA 15003-2302
724-385-8000
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

Communications

Pastor Mark Ryman
mryman@thenalc.org

Please send donations to the office in New Brighton, Minn.

NALC News

Published monthly by

North American Lutheran Church

3500 Mill Run Drive
Hilliard, OH 43026-7770

Phone: 614-777-5709

www.thenalc.org

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

*Please copy and share
this newsletter widely.*