

NALC News

North American Lutheran Church

November 2016

NALC Disaster Response hurricane relief efforts continue in North Carolina

Hurricane Matthew made landfall in the United States on Oct. 7, moving up the eastern coast and stalling over North Carolina, causing flooding in more than 50,000 homes before moving out to sea.

NALC congregations are supporting the Carolinas Mission District in its response to the thousands of families in need.

Through NALC Disaster Response, six truckloads of bottled water, flood buckets, health kits, school supplies, and quilts have been delivered to the hardest hit areas of Fayetteville and Greenville, N.C. This is more than \$40,000 in support provided by NALC congregations!

The Carolinas Mission District congregations have delivered two truckloads of material goods from a collection point in Statesville, N.C.

Advent Lutheran Church in Kings Mountain, N.C., is scheduled to send a volunteer team to the Lumberton, N.C., area Dec. 8-11. This is Advent's third mission trip, supporting families who have lost everything.

The NALC Disaster Response Task Force is issuing a call to action. Immediate needs include:

1. Gift cards for Lowe's, Home Depot, Target or Walmart. Gift cards may be mailed to the NALC Disaster Warehouse in care of Mary Bates; P.O. Box 176; Caldwell, OH 43724.
2. Volunteer teams will be needed throughout 2017 to help with rebuilding efforts. You may schedule your team through Mary Bates. Contact her at 740-509-1132 or mary@harpmission.org.



One of six truckloads of relief supplies from NALC Disaster Response sent to North Carolina in response to Hurricane Matthew.

3. New toys for Christmas and children's Bibles are needed for children who have lost everything. Send to NALC Disaster Warehouse; 810 Main Street; P.O. Box 176; Caldwell, OH 43724 by Dec. 16.

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Hurricane Matthew response in Haiti

Hurricane Matthew made landfall in Haiti on Oct. 4 as a powerful Category 4 storm triggering flash floods, landslides and mudflows endangering lives and leading to extensive property damage.

Lutheran World Relief and Water Mission are among the relief agencies responding to devastation left by Hurricane Matthew in Haiti. Both LWR and Water Mission are recognized ministries of the North American Lutheran Church.

According to the United Nations, an estimated 1.4 million people are in need of humanitarian assistance. More than 141,000 people are living in 204 temporary shelters and 806,000 people are at an extreme level of food insecurity. About 750,000 people will require access to safe drinking water and proper sanitation services for the next three months.

Lutheran World Relief

Lutheran World Relief has staff on the ground in Haiti and is coordinating with key local partners and the Haitian government to best direct an emergency response to Hurricane Matthew. The immediate response, which now amounts to \$1.2 million, will reach 50,000 people in some of the most affected areas.

LWR is also supporting distributions led by Lutheran World Federation (LWF) and Norwegian Church Aid (NCA) that will reach more than 10,000 people. NCA is distributing hygiene kits that include water purification tablets, soap, shampoo, toilet paper, toothpaste and laundry soap. The same families are also receiving LWF shelter kits, which include two tarps, two blankets and rope per the Haitian Government guidelines. In addition to these items, LWR has shipped 7,260 Quilts, 8,740 Personal Care Kits, 6,500 School Kits, 1,200 Baby Care Kits and 3,000 pounds of soap as part of its Material Resource assistance program.



People line up for water at one of Water Mission's safe water treatment systems in Haiti.

To donate or for additional information about LWR's response to Hurricane Matthew and other emergencies around the world, please visit lwr.org. Donations may be mailed to Lutheran World Relief; PO Box 17061; Baltimore, MD 21297-1061.

Water Mission

Water Mission has installed 16 safe water treatment systems in southwest Haiti. More systems are being installed in the city of Jérémie to serve the needs of the local hospital, displacement camps, and a relief workers' camp. These systems combined will provide safe water for upwards of 195,000 people.

Water Mission's Haiti team is co-developing a national plan with the Haitian national water agency, DINEPA, UNICEF Haiti, USAid, and Catholic Relief Services.

In addition to the safe water treatment systems, Water Mission has shipped 880 household water filtration units and 14,000 personal hygiene kits.

To donate or to learn more about Water Mission's hurricane relief efforts go to watermission.org. Donations may be mailed to Water Mission, P.O. Box 71489, N. Charleston, SC 29415.

Bibles and blankets for disaster relief

The Women of the NALC from St. Thomas Lutheran Church in Trufant, Mich., held a Mission Sunday on Nov. 13 and collected Bibles and blankets for Hurricane Matthew relief.

Mary Bates of NALC Disaster Response was their guest speaker for the Sunday morning service.

NALC Disaster Response continues to collect gift cards (Lowe's, Home Depot, Target or Walmart) Bibles, quilts, and new toys for Christmas for the more than 50,000 families in North Carolina impacted by Hurricane Matthew.

These items should be sent to:



Mary Bates of NALC Disaster Response (center) and Pastor Mathew Magera and his wife, Lane, with the Bibles, blankets and offerings collected to assist victims of Hurricane Matthew in the United States.



Flooding in North Carolina from Hurricane Matthew.

NALC Disaster Warehouse
810 Main Street
P.O. Box 176
Caldwell, OH 43724

Financial gifts may be made online at www.thenalc.org or sent to:

North American Lutheran Church
2299 Palmer Drive, Suite 220
New Brighton MN 55112-2202.

Please note "Disaster Response" on the check memo line.

To volunteer to assist with disaster relief projects at any time in the coming months, email Mary Bates at batesm55@gmail.com or call 740-509-1132.

North Carolina disaster relief

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4. Your prayers are needed most of all.

Cash donations to NALC Disaster Response may be given online at www.thenalc.org or sent to NALC Disaster Response; 2299 Palmer Drive, Suite 220; New Brighton, MN 55112-2202.

For more information on how you can help in North Carolina, contact Mary Bates at 740-509-1132 or mary@harpmission.org.

Advent - A time for teaching the faith

Dear Followers of Christ in the North American Lutheran Church:

During my recent trip to China to meet with church leaders and “church workers” or missionaries, I was able to engage in conversations regarding the Word, the Sacraments, and worship. I raised these concerns because there are no denominations in China. There is only the CCC — the Chinese Christian Church.

However, Lutherans were among the first and the strongest missionary presence in China beginning in the 19th Century. The Lutheran confessional understandings are deeply embedded in the faith of Christians in China.

In addition, the Church is continuing to grow and expand both in the congregations that are registered with the government and those that are not. The number of young adults coming to faith in Jesus Christ is astounding. The entire church throughout China is highly committed to Life-to-Life Discipleship.

Since there is little opportunity for overt evangelism and witnessing, people share their faith through every possible relationship. It begins in homes and spreads to extended families, neighborhoods, work and business associations, and especially on college campuses. In the midst of the constraining regulations of the government, Christian faith is being shared in the privacy of these personal conversations.

The congregational leaders focus on teaching the faith, preparing adults and entire families for Baptism, insuring their continued growth in the faith in the context of the Christian community in the life of the local congregation, and equipping them for sharing their faith in Jesus Christ with others.

Preparation for Baptism is a major priority for the congregation. It is clearly focused on the grace of Jesus Christ and the primacy of Christ’s presence and promises. The work and the power of Baptism are from the Holy Spirit conferred through the water and the Word.



From the Bishop

Bishop John Bradosky

There are two times in the Church year specifically reserved for Baptism. Easter is obvious. During the course of my ministry I always tried to ensure we had baptisms to celebrate on the Eve of Easter. I only wish I had taken as much time in preparing those individuals and families as the CCC does. They devote the entire season of Lent for that preparation.

I confess that in my own ministry I was often more concerned with finding some innovative plan or program to give our own people a compelling reason to attend a midweek worship opportunity. Often there was more time spent on menus than the mission of teaching the faith, preparing and equipping people for life in Christ, life in the community of faith and a life of sharing the Gospel of Jesus Christ with others.

Historically, the Body of Christ took seriously these responsibilities of discipling those who came to faith in Jesus Christ. Their commitment to this mission kept the Church growing numerically and maturing spiritually.

The second major opportunity for Baptisms in the Church year for the Chinese Christian Church is Christmas, and the season of preparation is Advent.

As the Chinese Christians described this to me, I was ashamed that throughout my ministry I was often overwhelmed with fitting in all the special celebrations and fellowship events, cantatas and concerts, Sunday School programs and events for staff and lay leaders, designing midweek worship

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and Christmas Eve services focused on interesting themes. The mayhem of this season overshadowed any sense of mission in teaching the faith. It was a very rare occurrence that I ever celebrated a Baptism on Christmas Day. If there was a season when preparation for Baptism was “shortchanged,” it was Advent and Christmas. Yet, when I returned and researched the history of Advent, I discovered that the focus of the CCC was more historically faithful to the mission of the Church than the focus of my ministry for many years.

Advent is the beginning of the Church Year. The word “Advent” means coming or arrival. The entire focus of the season is one of preparation. We prepare to celebrate Christ’s birth, His incarnation, His arrival into our world. The texts also force us to deal with the reality of His return in power and glory. In this season of preparation and anticipation, filled with hope, we also encounter themes of accountability, faithfulness, judgment regarding sin and the promises of forgiveness and eternal life.

This double focus on past and future is symbolic of the spiritual journey of both the individual and the congregation. We affirm that Christ has come, Christ is present, and Christ will return. From the Incarnation to the consummation of history, we live in this reality focused on mission — celebrating and proclaiming the truth about God, the revelation of God in Christ through His reconciling life, death and resurrection.

We are not mere passive observers but active participants in this reality. We participate as we faithfully follow Christ, living in a community of mutually-accountable relationships, and participating in Christ’s mission by sharing our faith and discipling others. The Messiah, the One who reigns in our life, will one day bring His righteousness, justice and peace to His entire kingdom. This is our hope and the hope we have to share with the entire world, life in Christ Jesus.

It is my prayer as you prepare for Advent and Christmas that you will not miss a precious opportunity to teach the faith, focused on the mission of the Church, to not only have hope, but to bear witness to the hope that is ours in Christ Jesus in word and deed through every relationship.

ADVENT-

Make ready
the way of Lord.



Rather than finding some creative plan or innovative program for Advent, I encourage you to focus on teaching the faith, preparing people for Baptism, helping the the baptized to mature in faith, and equipping them to share their faith in Christ in every relationship this Christmas. I am convinced that this is the heritage that we must reclaim as we move forward in mission and ministry. It is a heritage that is still alive and well in China. The Lord is blessing their faithful focus. As millions continue to come to faith in Christ, it is obvious their witness is bearing fruit abundantly.

May our hope and commitment to the mission of making disciples be renewed and strengthened this Advent.

With you following Christ, filled with hope and expectation,

Bishop John Bradosky

Martin Luther exhibits celebrate 500th anniversary of Reformation

Online component allows congregations to create their own exhibit

In 2017, Germany will host an array of activities and exhibitions in honor of the 500th anniversary of the Reformation. Germany is also bringing its Reformation celebrations to the United States.

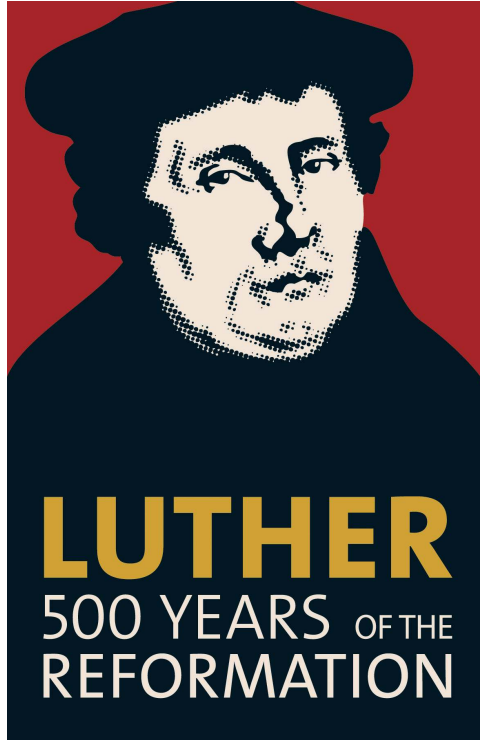
German museums are sponsoring three major exhibitions in the United States under the umbrella title “Here I Stand.” The exhibits are taking place in Minneapolis, New York, and Atlanta.

Online Exhibit

In addition to these traditional exhibitions, the “Here I Stand” project also includes a modern online component. #HereIStand allows institutions, including congregations and schools, to download a Luther exhibition and present it on their own premises.

#HereIStand is available online at here-i-stand.com. It offers new possibilities with the help of downloadable multimedia data. Users can download images or even 3D scans of original exhibits which they can then print and present locally.

The featured archeological artifacts, authentic relics, works of art, autographs, and prints come together to beautifully portray the work and life of Martin Luther as well as the Protestant Reformation and its far-reaching impact on history and culture.



Special focus is placed on the towns and cities that played an important role in the Reformation, as well as on exclusive relics that reveal fascinating insights into Reformation history and the life of the Great Reformer. Visitors can also view some of Luther Country’s greatest cultural treasures, which are also on display.

With the “Here I Stand” exhibitions, many original artifacts will be shown in the United States for the first time.

Minneapolis

The most extensive of the three “Here I Stand” exhibitions, “Martin

Luther: Art and the Reformation” will be shown through Jan. 15 at the Minneapolis Institute of Art.

This exhibition examines Luther’s life and influence from an artist’s perspective, featuring over 100 objects that have never before been displayed on American soil. Together, these exhibits paint a vivid picture of the life and work of Martin Luther and discuss the events of the Reformation within the cultural context of the 16th century.

Numerous exhibits are on loan from the collections inside the Luther House in Lutherstadt Wittenberg, the world’s largest Reformation history museum. This unique opportunity was made possible due to the closing of the Luther House in preparation for 2017 events.

Art played a central role in the Reformation, with Martin Luther himself greatly influencing the development of art at that time. In “Martin Luther: Art and the Reformation,” this impact is made visible through an array of rarely seen masterpieces on loan from museum collections from the heart of Germany, including extraordinary paintings, massive sculptures, delicate embroideries, and tiny treasures of silver and gold.

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Visitors will get an intimate look at Luther's life through a remarkable assembly of his personal possessions accompanied by recent archaeological discoveries found in his childhood and adult homes. Many exhibits were unearthed at his parental home in Mansfeld Lutherstadt and shed new light on the Reformer's childhood.

This exhibition will be the first time these items are presented to a large audience outside of Germany.

New York

The Morgan Library and Museum in the heart of downtown Manhattan will host "Word and Image: Martin Luther's Reformation," an exhibition featuring some of the Reformation's greatest treasures through Jan. 22.

The exhibition will focus on events in Luther's life that were particularly relevant to the beginning of the Reformation.

As the title suggests, the origin and development of the Reformation is shown through words and images with the help of more than 80 unique exhibits, many of which are on loan from some of Germany's top museums.

The central focus of the exhibition is a letter from Martin Luther to the former German Emperor Charles V from 1521. In this letter, Luther justifies his refusal to renounce his theses and tries in vain to evoke the emperor's understanding.

It is thought that this letter never reached its intended recipient. The letter was purchased at an auction by John Pierpont Morgan, founder of the Morgan Library, in 1911.

Morgan gifted the letter to Emperor Wilhelm II, who in turn donated it to the Luther House in Lutherstadt Wittenberg.

Further exhibition highlights include one of the only five existing printed copies of the Ninety-Five Theses; Luther's manuscript draft of his translation of the Old Testament; around 20 paintings, prints, and drawings by Lucas Cranach the Elder; the original pulpit from the church in Wittenberg where



This 1529 painting of Martin Luther and his wife, Katharina von Bora, by Lucas Cranach the Elder is among the works of art shown in the Minneapolis exhibition.

Luther preached; and more than 30 of Luther's most important publications, including the ones that led the pope to excommunicate Luther, making him the most prosperous heretic in history.

Atlanta

"Law and Grace: Martin Luther, Lucas Cranach, and the Promise of Salvation" is the title of an exhibition at the Pitts Theology Library of the Candler School at Emory University in Atlanta through Jan. 16.

The exhibition features breathtaking works by the masterful painter Lucas Cranach the Younger.

Cranach was born in Lutherstadt Wittenberg, where guests can still visit a number of authentic locations with ties to Cranach.

By explicating the iconography of Cranach's paintings, this important exhibition deals with the heart and soul of the Reformation: Salvation through the grace of God alone.

Two books accompany the exhibits — a collection of essays and a catalog of items in the exhibits. The books include all of the themes of the exhibitions in a concise form. They are available at the exhibit sites and online.

For more information on the exhibits or the online collection go to here-i-stand.com or visit-luther.com.

Faith in Action Day sent church members into their community

Sunday, Sept. 18, St. Mark's Lutheran Church in Auburn, Ind., left the building.

After gathering at the church for Communion, 90 members — from 5 years old to 90 years old — from St. Mark's joined members from Auburn First United Methodist Church in serving their community. All were dressed in bright red Faith in Action shirts.

This event, called Faith in Action Day, was an amazing opportunity to share the faith with their community, as they served others.

The church members participated in Faith in Action Day because, as Christians, they believe that God has called them to be there for their community; to care for it and seek its well being.

For them, Faith in Action Day is not just an event to do one day a year, but an opportunity to reveal to the church the ways to care for their community. They also have the goal of this becoming an ecumenical movement in their community, bringing churches together in serving Auburn, and were



A student helps clean a book shelf at a local Children's First Building.

happy that Auburn First United Methodist church would partner with them in this event.



Faith in action participants repairing a fence in a historic cemetery in Auburn, that was in great disrepair.

The participants broke into teams, made up of members from each church, to complete projects around town. The projects included painting fences, serving nursing homes, cleaning buildings, removing invasive plants, sprucing up a cemetery, writing letters to veterans, compiling care kits, and distributing baked goods and sewn items to local organizations.

What an amazing opportunity they had to serve their community, to bless it with the love of Jesus Christ!

If you have any questions about having a Faith in Action Day in your church, we would love to talk with you about this! Email Pastor Dan Bellinger at pastordan@stmarksauburn.org with any questions.

Mission Finder

centralizes mission resources

Some of the NALC's most requested materials are now housed in the NALC Network "Mission Finder," a way to bring people and mission resources together.

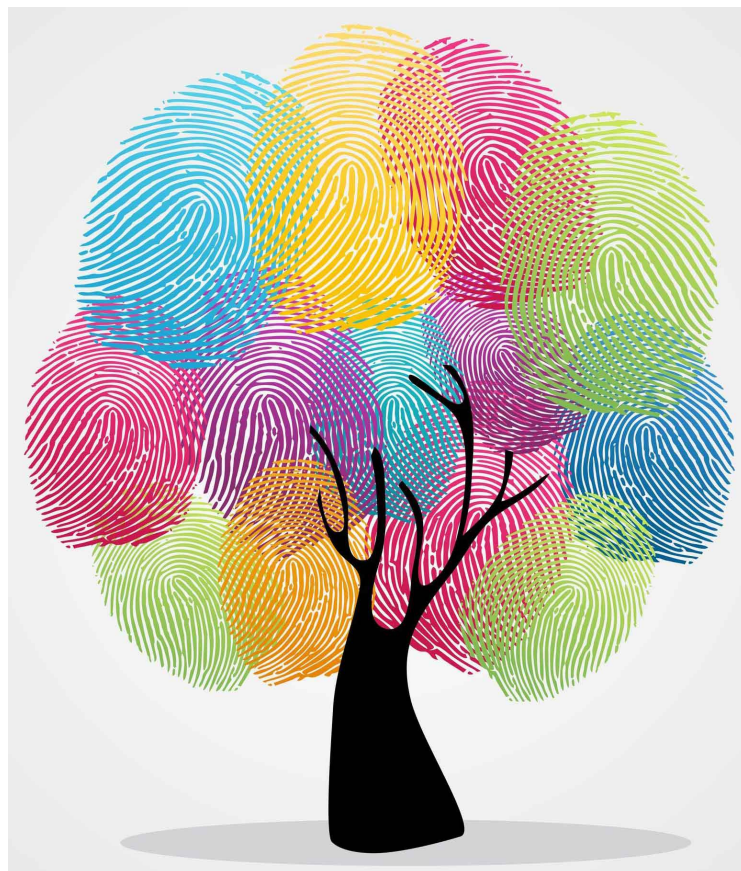
Mission Finder allows congregations and individuals to:

- + Search for short-term mission trips to join or support.
- + Invite others to join in what your congregation is doing or has planned.
- + Find creative ideas for discipleship and mission.
- + Locate local, domestic and global mission opportunities.
- + Access data using multiple filtering and search criteria.
- + Submit your congregation's mission activity information.

As Mission Finder continues to grow, we need the help of our pastors and congregational leaders. Mission Finder will only be as accurate as the information it contains. Your assistance is needed in expanding two areas that will present a fuller and more accurate picture of mission in the NALC.

Congregational Ministry Involvement: Mission Finder now contains data previously available to the NALC from annual congregational reports, Great Commission Society "adoption" paperwork, and more. If you or your congregation began supporting new ministries in 2015 and 2016, please take a few minutes to update or add your congregation's mission involvement information at <http://bit.ly/2fIB0JK>.

Short-Term Mission Trips: Each year the NALC Missions Office receives many inquiries about



joining with other NALC congregations to serve in the area of short-term missions. Mission Finder will allow congregations and individuals to access this information.

Some congregations may have people interested in participating in a mission trip but not have the financial resources available to send a team. Other congregations may have a few open spots on their team that need filling.

If you are planning a short-term trip in the future, please consider taking a few minutes to add or update information about your mission trip by completing the form found at <http://bit.ly/2g2U3mp>.

Visit <http://nalcnetwork.com/missionfinder> today to explore and learn more about this exciting tool that showcases local, domestic and global mission connected with the NALC.

Speakers are announced for Church Planting and Renewal Conference

The speakers have been announced for the NALC Church Planting and Renewal Conference Jan. 5-6 in Fayetteville (near Atlanta), Ga. “Plant, Grow, Bloom — It’s Not an Option” is the theme for the conference.



Wendy Berthelsen



Gemechis Buba



Richard Dalton



Trina Petersen

Each of these gifted leaders will focus on different aspects of the metaphor “Plant, Grow, Bloom.” Some are gifted at preparing and analyzing the soil. Others are gifted at continuing to care for/tend the soil after “planting.” Each presenter will concentrate on the nuts and bolts specific to their respective areas.

Pastor Gemechis Buba currently serves as Assistant to the Bishop for Missions for the North American Lutheran Church. He is originally from Ethiopia and now lives in Atlanta with his wife and three children.

Pastor Buba received a Bachelor of Theology with high distinction from Mekane Yesus Theological Seminary in Ethiopia, where he served as a professor for two years. After working on a Master of Theology in Church History at the Ethiopian Graduate School of Theology, he moved to the United States for further studies.

In 2003 he received his Master of Divinity and Master of Arts in Christian Education from the Interdenominational Theological Center in Atlanta. In 2006 he earned a doctorate from Columbia Theological Seminary, Decatur, Ga., specializing in missional leadership. Pastor Buba was ordained in 2001.

He has served as a seminary professor, mission developer, senior pastor, vice president of the Southeastern Black Lutheran Pastors’ Conference,

assistant to the bishop of the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod ELCA, director of African National Ministries for the ELCA, and president of the worldwide Union of Oromo Evangelical Churches. He was pastor of St. Stephen Evangelical Lutheran Church and the African-Oromo Lutheran Church in Atlanta.

The Rev. Dr. Richard Dalton is an ordained Presbyterian minister who has worked for the Southern Christian Leadership Conference and was designated as a “Point of Light” by U.S. President George Bush. Dr. Dalton has spoken on a variety of social and educational issues at Oxford University and the University of Passau in Germany. He has also provided leadership training in Kenya and assisted in a study at Harvard. Currently, he directs Storehouse Ministries in Dayton, Ohio, and is the community coordinator for the Global Kindness Revolution.

Pastor Trina Petersen is founding pastor of A New Thing Christian Church in Lithonia, Ga. — a ministry entrusted to her by God, focused on the deliverance, healing and wholeness of His people. Pastor Petersen was baptized and confirmed and served in the Lutheran Church prior to becoming an ordained pastor in the NALC. She is currently serving as Dean of the NALC’s Mid-South Mission District and chair of the church’s New Starts Team.

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Emmanuel Abraham served as leader in both church and state in Ethiopia

Dr. Emmanuel Abraham, 103, has gone to be with the Lord after a long and full life in ministry and service to both his Lord and Savior Jesus Christ and his country, Ethiopia. He passed away on Saturday, Oct. 22, 2016.

Born March 17, 1913, he represented his country as Ambassador to Rome and then to England and as the Minister of Plenipotentiary to India. On returning to Ethiopia in 1943, he was appointed first as Director General in the Ministry of Education, and then as Chief of Political Affairs in Emperor Haile Selassie's private cabinet.

Due to his hard work and commitment, he was appointed to different high level government posts between 1961 and 1974, first as Minister of Posts, Telegraphs and Telephones, then as Minister of Communications and finally as Minister of Mines. The military revolution which broke out in 1974 led to his detention along with other former officials. However, he was exonerated by the military leaders and freed nine months later.



Emmanuel Abraham

Dr. Emmanuel also represented the Ethiopian Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus (EECMY) at various levels. He was a member of the seven-person Ethiopian delegation to the first All-Africa Lutheran Conference (Nov. 12-22, 1955), held in Marangu, in the then Tanganyika.

At the third Lutheran World Federation Assembly held in Minneapolis, Minn., in 1957, the Ethiopian Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus was received as a member of LWF. At that Assembly, Dr. Emmanuel Abraham was elected to the LWF Executive Committee, where he served until 1963.

In 1963, His Excellency Dr. Emmanuel Abraham was elected the second president of the Ethiopian Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus by the General Assembly of the Church, and thus, led the church for 22 years through consecutive elections.

Eternal rest grant unto him, O Lord. And let perpetual light shine upon him.

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Pastor Petersen writes children's books and pursues a variety of other creative opportunities to share the Gospel. She describes herself as Kingdom-minded, serving in the position of pastor, operating with an apostolic anointing, and speaking in a prophetic voice as she helps the people of God heal from their pasts, live in the now, and walk in the power and authority given to them by God.

Pastor Wendy Berthelsen has partnered with her husband, Joel, both in ministry and at home, for many years. Having complementary gifts, they have a passion for each person in the church to know and live out their call from God: the call to know, follow and serve Jesus. They believe that each person is unique and God desires to custom design

His church around people. They believe that God's call has to do with all of life — one's work, family, community and world. They are graced and honored to be the parents of four children, Amara, Stefan, Philip and Ana.

Pastor Berthelsen graduated from Gustavus Adolphus College and Luther Seminary (Master of Divinity), both in Minnesota. Most of her time as a pastor is devoted to Call, Inc., a teaching mission of Hope Lutheran Church in Cedar Hill, Texas.

This training event is a good opportunity for those who are interested in planting a church, those already involved in a new start, and for those in the midst of renewal of a congregation. For more information or to register, go to <http://nalcnetwork.com/plant-grow-bloom>.

A testimony from a 'None'

A reader-contributed column in the Sept. 23, 2016, issue of *Time* magazine was subtitled "My life as a 'None' and other tales from the ranks of the unaffiliated and the agnostic." The writer, Susanna Schrobsdorff, offered a candid, well-written description of her life as a "none" — a person with no religious affiliation.

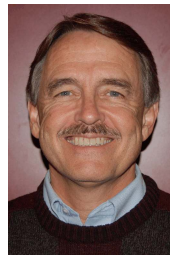
She begins with a description of a yoga retreat she attended in Upstate New York. This particular retreat was *not* a secular version of Yoga. A statue of the Hindu god Ganesh was displayed. "We, a room full of well-meaning, spandex-wearing, mostly aging and somewhat tattooed women were chanting Ganesh mantras in Sanskrit," Schrobsdorff wrote.

"Since then, I've questioned my casual pursuit of spirituality ... And, like a lot of people, I have become an acolyte of the church of self-improvement, choosing appealing bits of other faiths to better my lot. I'm just the kind of person that author and pastor Lilliah Daniel has aptly mocked, writing, 'You are now comfortably in the norm for self-centered American culture, right smack in the bland majority of people who find ancient religions dull but find themselves uniquely fascinating,'" she wrote.

As she concluded her column, Schrobsdorff reflected on the recent death of her mother — a lapsed Catholic, but a woman of faith. "I know that my mother had the certainty that she would go 'home,' as she called it, where her long-gone parents and my sister were. It was a comfort I envied as I watched her slip away. ... Then, as now, I longed for faith."

Imagine all the people in our culture who share a similar view — living in the tension between agnosticism and a vague desire to live and experience a more "spiritual" life. And, like Schrobsdorff, envying those who, because of their faith, seem to be better equipped to face their mortality.

Of course the reality is that there are members in your congregation who, in a moment of honesty,



In Pursuit of the Great Commission

Pastor Don Brandt

would admit that faith is a struggle for them as well. Not surprising, given how outspoken many of the "nones" have become in our society. Whether it be in private conversation or through online media, atheists have become both more ubiquitous and militant. This has undoubtedly taken a toll when it comes to the spiritual health of some of our members.

When our culture was more accommodating of "organized religion," our people were less likely to have their faith challenged. But now Christians, more than in the recent past, need to "be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have." The text goes on to say, "But do this with gentleness and respect, keeping a clear conscience, so that those who speak maliciously against your good behavior in Christ may be ashamed of their slander" (1 Peter 3:15-16).

An intentional discipling ministry is one way to help your members both grow in their faith commitment and equip them to be more effective as witnesses for Jesus Christ.

In case you haven't heard, there are many NALC congregations currently engaged in a pragmatic and comprehensive discipling process where the goal is nothing less than congregational renewal. My congregation is already one year into this three-year process. Contact me, or the NALC office, if you would like to know more about this ministry initiative.

We can no longer afford to pursue congregational ministry as if we were living in a predominately

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NALC Pastors Conference is Feb. 14-16

The 2017 NALC Pastors Conference will be held Feb. 14-16 at the Crowne Plaza Orlando Universal in Orlando, Fla.

The Rev. Dr. James Nestingen, noted Martin Luther scholar, will be the featured speaker. He will have two presentations on Luther's Doctrine of Vocation and two presentations on the lectionary preaching texts for Lent, Holy Week and Easter.

Bishop John Bradosky will lead a meeting of the NALC Ministerium and a worship service including the renewal of ordination vows and the blessing of anointing oil for use in congregations.

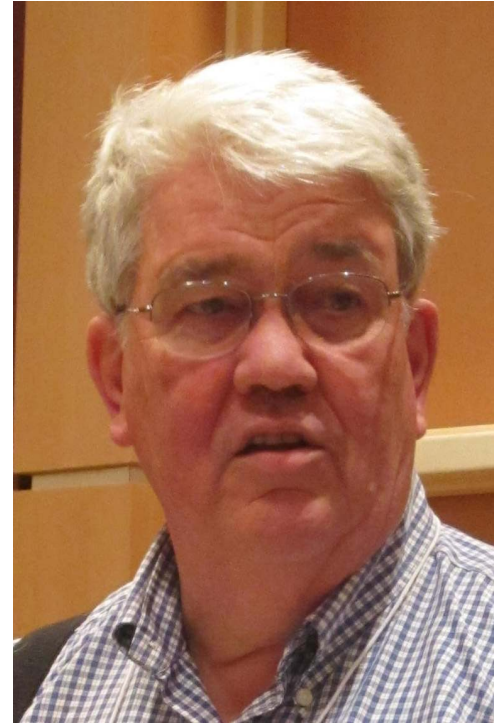
All congregational leaders and members are asked to support and encourage their pastor's participation in the annual NALC

Pastors Conference through council/congregational action and to provide financial support. Each congregation and pastor will benefit from full involvement in the NALC Ministerium.

Registration is \$100 per person until Dec. 31 and \$125 beginning Jan. 1. Registration includes breakfast and dinner on Wednesday and breakfast on Thursday.

A discounted hotel rate of \$120 per night is available at the hotel for rooms booked by Jan. 16. The discounted rate will be honored two days before and one day after the conference.

Clergy spouses, seminarians and non-NALC clergy are welcome to attend but must register to be included in the group meals.



James Nestingen

To register or for more information go to the NALC website — www.thenalc.org.

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Christian culture. The secular challenges we face as the Body of Christ are only growing more daunting. It's time to mobilize!

“Preach the Word; be prepared in season and out of season; correct, rebuke and encourage — with great patience and careful instruction. For the time will come when men will not put up with sound doctrine. Instead, to suit their own desires, they will gather around them a great number of teachers to say what their itching ears want to hear. They will turn their ears away from the truth and turn aside to myths. But you, keep your head in all situations, endure hardship, do the work of an evangelist, discharge all the duties of your ministry.” — 2 Timothy 4:2-5

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

WNALC consider revised guidelines

Delegates to the 2016 Women of the NALC Annual Gathering voted to approve revisions to the WNALC Operational Guidelines.

The revised Guidelines have been submitted to women's groups in NALC congregations for ratification.

The proposed Guidelines and voting instructions are available on the Women of the NALC website www.wnalc.org.

Votes must be submitted by Feb. 1

Love, respect and good communication

What is a pastor and what is pastoral leadership?

"This is my commandment, that you love one another, as I have loved you." — John 15:12

Having served 30 years as pastor of two congregations, one sees parishioners at their best and at their worst.

It was always sad to see couples who had been together 20, 30, or 40 years in marriage, yet treating one another more unkindly and unlovingly than friends, co-workers or strangers! Often communication has broken down so that husband and wife speak to one another sarcastically if at all, with the normal pattern being passive-aggressive behavior toward each other.

Rather than speaking honestly and straightforwardly with each other, couples will publicly suppress their feelings and opinions, while allowing them to surface in unhealthy ways — through sarcastic comments, muttering, inappropriate facial expression, and lack of respect. Couples who have fallen into such patterns are often unpleasant to be with, hard to be around, and try to pull others into their unhealthy relationship. Is this what God intends for holy marriages? Surely not.

Although every metaphor breaks down at some point, it's helpful to envision the pastor-congregation relationship as a marriage. In these Ministry Matters articles, we've touched on that several times, as there are many ways in which the two relationships are similar. Yet another way is that pastors and congregations often fall into unhealthy patterns of relating to one another — and passive-aggressive communication is one indication that relationships in the congregation have broken down and there is need for seeking helpful and hopeful ways to improve how to relate to one another.

The first and most obvious indication that there is a communication breakdown in a congregation — whether between pastor and council, pastor and congregation, council and congregation, or between congregational members — is lack of straightforward, honest, open communication.



Ministry Matters

Pastor David Wendel

Assistant to the Bishop
for Ministry and Ecumenism

Passive-aggressive communication is sometimes described as a range of behaviors designed to "get back" at someone else, without that person recognizing the underlying anger or displeasure.

In congregations, this can surface as subtle sabotage of leaders, ministries or activities. When a member of the congregation, or the pastor, doesn't get his or her way, rather than deal honestly with their displeasure, they may mutter to themselves, try to stir up dissension "behind the scenes," send anonymous hurtful letters. Such behavior is certainly dysfunctional and indicates reliance upon unhealthy coping mechanisms, often by people who never learned how to relate to others in cooperative, productive and positive ways.

Pastors, council leaders, and congregational members may all be guilty of such behaviors and anyone who has witnessed it realizes that no community can be healthy and forward-moving when such behavior is tolerated. It is the responsibility of pastors and council leaders to teach and model love and respect within the congregation, which will lead to open and honest communication.

Here are some helpful steps and strategies:

1. Pastor, congregational leaders and members realize that it is not "my" or "our" church. At times decisions will be made for the good of the whole body. Rather than being disappointed at not getting their way, the decision that is best for all should

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be supported. This mind-set keeps us from being angry or displeased with decisions, actions or the direction of our ministry.

2. When angry or displeased, acknowledge it in a healthy, productive way. Discuss it openly with a friend, fellow member, or pastor. Anger, disappointment and displeasure are all natural human reactions. We always strive to use anger “creatively,” for the good of ourselves and for all — not to tear down or sabotage.

3. Be a good listener, respecting the thoughts and comments of others, even when we disagree. Pastors and council leaders often become defensive when there are disagreements, and defensiveness shuts down and discourages communication. This is why, at the end of every council meeting, there should be time for “processing” the meeting. Was everyone heard? Is there something that wasn’t said? How did we do at listening and hearing each other? Were we loving, respectful and Christ-like toward one another?

4. Make clear, straightforward comments. When a congregation values and models open, honest communication based on mutual respect and love, there is no need for muttering under one’s breath, whispering negative comments to another, or criticizing people or positions while standing in the dark parking lot after a meeting!

5. Exercise self-control. Discipleship, at its root, involves discipline, and discipline means self-control. We control ourselves, we think twice before speaking, we seek to be Christ-like in our thoughts, words and actions.

6. Express respect to one another! St. Paul beseeches us to “respect those who labor among you” (1 Thessalonians 5:12). He is speaking of those who are “over you” — but we can certainly broaden that to respect for all who labor among us in the church. We are to respect each other as we labor side-by-side in the Body of Christ.

7. Work together for a positive outcome. Although this should be obvious and need not be said, the reality is that the all-too-human Body of Christ — in every part of the world, in every denomination, in

every congregation — struggles with our sinful humanity. Pastors, councils and congregations often work at odds with each other, hindering mission and ministry. The church is a body, and it only functions well when all parts of the body are cooperating, communicating and working together for the good of all.

8. Finally, every congregation and council will find itself blessed by memorizing and living by Galatians 5: 22-25: “The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such there is no law. And those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. If we live by the Spirit, let us also walk by the Spirit.”

Advent devotions by Pastor Wendel

Amen. Come, Lord Jesus, an Advent devotional booklet for 2016, is now available on the NALC website.

The devotions, prepared by Pastor David Wendel, Assistant to the Bishop for Ministry and Ecumenism, are new this Advent. They are based on Year 1 of the *Lutheran Book of Worship* daily lectionary.

The devotional booklet is free and may be printed and copied for use in the home, by families, in congregations, Bible study groups, etc.

You also may sign up to receive the Advent devotional material as a daily text or email message. To receive a daily Advent devotional text message, text @nalcadvent to 614-682-8693. To receive a daily Advent devotional email message, go to remind.com/join/nalcadvent and enter your name and email address where indicated.

Daily devotions by NALC pastors are available on the NALC website, on the NALC Network, and on Facebook each day of the year. The devotions from Pastor Wendel will be featured during Advent and are the same as those in the booklet.



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