

Overflowing with Generosity

NALC Stewardship Emphasis Resources available for congregational use

By Pastor David Wendel

Assistant to the Bishop for Ministry and Ecumenism

The North American Lutheran Church is introducing a new emphasis to strengthen and encourage faithful stewardship throughout our church body,

The emphasis theme is “Overflowing with Generosity,” based on 2 Corinthians 8:1-7, in which Paul is pointing to the example of the churches of Macedonia where, in spite of challenge and trial, they gave beyond their means by the grace of God.

The keynote of the emphasis is a Bible-study oriented video by Bishop John Bradosky, speaking on the theme Scripture verses. An earlier version of the video was previewed at the 2016 NALC Convocation when the stewardship emphasis was introduced.

The video is suitable for introducing the theme to church councils, adult forums, congregational meetings, and any context where folks would like to know about Christian stewardship in general and stewardship in the NALC in particular. It is faithful, encouraging and inspiring.

The video is available on the NALC website under the “Resources” tab. Two other tools designed to help your congregation with its stewardship ministry are also available on the NALC stewardship page:

+ *The Overflowing Generosity Stewardship Process* guidebook by Pastor Eugene Grimm.

+ A four-part Bible Study entitled *Overflowing Generosity* by Pastor Dona Johnson.

It has been said that stewardship is far more about *faith-raising* than it is about fundraising. The primary purpose of a stewardship emphasis in our congregations is to help our members grow spiritually. As we grow spiritually, we discover the joy of giving and a serendipitous effect will be that the church will have more money with which to fulfill the mission and ministry to which Christ calls us.

The key to effective stewardship, indeed to all ministry, is prayer. In your stewardship program:

+ Invite your members to pray for your stewardship emphasis.

+ Invite your members to pray about their own giving for the coming year.

+ Invite your members to pray for the work we do together as the NALC.

After all, the role of Christians is to give *ourselves* away for the sake of Christ.

You are invited to make use of all three resources to enhance the mission and ministry of your congregation. As you grow in your giving, we also invite you to prayerfully consider increasing your congregation’s participation in the mission of the NALC. As you are aware, the NALC is not a hierarchical church, yet there are many things that we can better do together than as individual congregations.

For those congregations desiring to increase their giving to the NALC but finding it a challenge to do

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Water Mission project for Rafiki Africa in Kenya in final phase of fundraising

By Kandice Null

Those at the last two NALC Convocations were told about Water Mission's proposed water project for Alendu, Kenya, and the Rafiki Africa ministry there. ("Rafiki" means "friend" in Swahili.)

The final fundraising phase has begun for this Water Mission-Rafiki Africa project. The goal now is to raise the remaining \$22,000 as soon as possible so that work can begin on the purification and distribution systems to provide a safe water supply for the village of Alendu, Kenya, and the Lighthouse Academy.

Reformation Lutheran Church, an NALC congregation in Lancaster, Pa., has been supporting the ministry of Rafiki Africa since 2012 and has been actively involved in raising money for this Water Mission project.

The congregation personally knows Dorothy Dulo, the founder of Rafiki Africa, and her husband, Roger Godfrey. They have a business in Lancaster and live in the neighboring community.

Rafiki Africa began in 1996 after Dorothy returned to visit her hometown village of Alendu after being away for five years to attend college in the United States.

Many changes occurred in her village while she was away. The AIDS epidemic had left many orphans to fend for themselves. Dorothy felt that she needed to do something, so she started by sponsoring one child for education at a local government school.

Then, in 1998, Dorothy and her father started a class for 12 kindergarten students in Alendu. Each year they added one more class. This eventually led to the establishment of the Lighthouse Academy which now serves 200 students who were at risk of not receiving an education anywhere else. There are graduates of Lighthouse who are now in college. Christian Education is an important part of



Well reaches water for Rafiki Africa as villagers look on.

the curriculum, and the community is very open to hearing the Gospel.

The Rafiki Africa ministry also serves the whole community by teaching them about health, running

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periodic clinics, teaching them to grow crops and helping them to market their products in order to make a living.

Dorothy and Roger know it is important for the members of this community and for the students to learn how to become self-sufficient and be accountable for themselves.

One of the big steps in helping this community become self-sufficient is having clean water. This has been a goal of Dorothy's and Roger's for some time now.

One of Reformation's members, Lee Mills, learned about Water Mission when it was introduced at the 2013 Convocation in Pittsburgh. When he heard about Dorothy and Roger's need for clean water in Alendu, he shared the information about the organization with them. Up to that point, they had had a number of frustrating experiences with other individuals and companies trying to get a well dug. It was exciting for them to see that Water Mission already had an office in Kenya, not far from Alendu. Roger was able to see the purification equipment and was very impressed with its quality. They then applied to have an evaluation and proposal from Water Mission.

The well was drilled in April of this year to ensure that there is a good source of water. Now the village residents are waiting for the rest of the system to be installed so they can drink clean water.

In June of 2015, there was less than \$2,000 in the Rafiki Africa fund for this water project that will cost



Dorothy Dulo, the founder of Rafiki Africa, and her husband, Roger Godfrey (center), pose with drilling team.

\$76,528. In just over a year, they are within \$22,000 of completing the fundraising for this project. Praise the Lord for the generosity of so many individuals, churches and groups who have made this possible. NALC congregations played a very big part in raising these funds.

The final fundraising phase has begun for this Water Mission-Rafiki Africa project. Once the remaining money is raised the work can get started to install the water purification and distribution systems, educate the people in Alendu on proper sanitation, and train those who will be managing the system. Accomplishing all this can take from two to six months. The hope is that Alendu can have safe drinking water in early 2017.

It has been three years from when the NALC announced its partnership with the Water Mission ministry and three years since Dorothy and Roger learned about Water Mission. Their dreams of having safe water for the Lighthouse Academy and the village of Alendu are getting very close to becoming a reality.

Your congregation can help this become a reality for Dorothy, Roger and the residents of Alendu. In order to help, please make your check payable to Water Mission, designate "Rafiki Africa Project" on the memo line, and send it to Water Mission, PO Box 71489, North Charleston, SC 29415.

For more information, please visit the Rafiki Africa website at www.rafikiafrica.org or the Water Mission website at watermission.org.



Lighthouse Academy provides Christian education for the most vulnerable children of this community from K-12th and College.

Theologians Without Borders

Celebrating graduation at Leadstar Theological College in Ethiopia

By Pastor Scott Ness

The history of the word “*Euangelion*” (Greek for “Good News” or “Gospel”) can be traced back to the story of Pheidippides, who was the runner sent from Athens to Sparta to recruit help to defeat the Persian army. In Greek antiquity, the word was translated as “good tidings.” And it was this message that villagers waited desperately to hear from the village runner following a battle. If the runner shouted “Good News!” it meant their villagers had won the field and the battle. It was a word of victory. “Good News, we won the battle; we get to live!”

It remains a word of victory for us as we claim the victory of Jesus Christ won upon the Cross and within the Tomb. “*Euangelion* — Good News! His victory is our victory! We live!”

This was the message that I brought on a recent trip to Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, through Theologians Without Borders. I joined Pastor Gemechis Buba, Assistant to the Bishop for Missions, along with other travelers, in celebrating the graduation exercises of Leadstar Theological College.



A family and its future are changed, for generations, because of the gift of education — and it is not taken for granted.



More than 1,700 people graduated from Leadstar Theological College in Ethiopia.

Leadstar's vision is to provide accessible, affordable, and excellent higher education to the people of Ethiopia. Born out of the vision of Dr. Buba, it is serving to raise, train, and equip leaders for the nation of Ethiopia. Its two-pronged approach works to raise business leaders and church leaders through degrees equivalent to Masters of Business Administration and Masters of Divinity.

While I was there, I celebrated as over 1,700 students were released into the workforce and to Kingdom work. Words do not express the energy and excitement I felt around me as I walked into the graduation venue. In a real sense, the future of Ethiopia was being formed and released into the world. Lives and futures were changing.

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You may have heard that the Ethiopian Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus is growing rapidly. While I was in Ethiopia, I had the privilege of meeting with the EECMY leadership to hear of their work and to pray with them in their pursuit of the Great Commission. Brothers and Sisters of the NALC, we have much to learn from our partners.

The EECMY's current evangelism initiative consists of some mind-boggling numbers. They are working on sharing the Good News of Jesus Christ with 5 million people through the mobilization efforts of 5,000 congregations. Their expectation is that 1 million new believers in Jesus Christ will be the result of this labor.

If that isn't shocking enough, the duration of this initiative might be: Only three weeks! All of this will be done by the people of the EECMY in just three weeks!

The primary method of sharing the Good News of Jesus is one-on-one conversations. Every person is a part of the team. All hands are on deck. Please join with me in prayer for this harvest as the Holy Spirit continues to move mightily among the people of Ethiopia. And pray that their faithfulness might inspire us to step forward in faithful evangelism, as well.

During my time in Ethiopia and in my processing since, I've asked what the secret to this amazing movement and growth is. Certainly there are cultural realities and factors of everyday life that play a large role in the difference between there and here. But I must say, the biggest factor that I witnessed was the Holy Spirit.

Not that the Holy Spirit is present in Africa and no longer in North America. Far from it. Instead, it is the attitude toward the Holy Spirit that is vitally different. In our over-intellectualized minds of the West, we have truncated the power of the Holy Spirit. We have clipped His wings. We are unwilling and uneasy with the powers and the workings of a God whom we can not put in a box. Somewhere in our past, understanding became our chief aim.

The Ethiopian spirit delights in the unknowable aspect of our God. There is a thirst for the mystery.



This thirst saturates every aspect of their faith-filled lives. It changes the way they worship. It changes the way they pray. It changes the way they leave their worship space and enter into the world. It changes the way that they bring hope to those who are lost. Oh, that we would capture a yearning for this Mystery of the Almighty!

Incredible growth doesn't come without its problems, however. And this is one of the largest reasons for Dr. Buba's vision. Leadstar Theological College, partnered with the EECMY, is working to develop the many leaders needed to help support the infrastructure of such a rapidly growing church.

It was before these men and women, as they graduated, that I stood and encouraged them to continue to run. "Run — as only Ethiopian marathoners can — with the Good News that the battle has been won. Continue to lead the world in distance running events and continue to lead the Body of Christ as you run to the people who desperately need to hear the Good News!"

South Carolina church shares the Gospel in the Dominican Republic

By Pastor Paulette McHugh

Thirty missionaries from St. Peter's Lutheran Church in Lexington, S.C., ranging in age from 15 to 74, embarked on a seven-day mission to the Dominican Republic (DR) on July 11.

We felt your prayers and support surrounding us and were blessed with an amazing, life-transforming experience. With your help and God's guidance, we were able to share the gospel of Jesus Christ with the least of these in one of the materially poorest countries in the Western Hemisphere.

While in the DR, we stayed near Barahona, a small city in the southern coast of the country. We worked and served in two communities about an hour's drive north — Batey Cuchilla and Batey Seven.

Batey is a word that means "place of suffering," so named by Dominicans as a place where Haitian refugee-immigrants settle and live. The people of the bateys are not recognized as Dominican citizens and find it very difficult to obtain visas and other paperwork to afford them protection and rights under the law of the land.

As a result, the bateys are indeed places of much suffering, with their residents virtually enslaved to sugar industry giants that own the surrounding land



Missionaries from St. Peter's Lutheran Church in Lexington, S.C., pose for a group picture in front of the water house in Batey Cuchilla, Dominican Republic.

and sometimes employ immigrant Haitians to harvest the sugar cane.

As mechanization replaces manual labor, most batey residents of working age have been forced to go to the cities to find employment. These workers send their wages home to children and other family members in the batey and typically come home only once a year.

We saw many, many children, a few young mothers, and even fewer old men and women living in Batey Cuchilla. It seemed to be a village of children raising themselves in a landscape of unimaginable poverty and squalor.

Our primary purpose in going to the DR was to share the gospel of Jesus Christ with the people of the bateys by building a water house in partnership with Water at Work (www.wateratworkministry.org).

The Water at Work ministry model is based on Jesus' encounter with the woman at the well as told in the fourth chapter of John. Water at Work partners with congregations in the United States to transform existing, unclean water sources in the DR into water houses that offer clean, safe and



Bible school in Batey Cuchilla

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affordable water for drinking, cooking, and bathing to communities in need while providing access to the Living Water through the Word of God.

Water at Work only works in the Dominican Republic. They currently have project sites all over the country and are always looking for missionary partners to go and work on the ground, as well as “sending partners” to make monthly donations to cover ministry expenses.

While in the DR, the St. Peter’s mission team built one of these water houses to provide clean, safe, free water to residents of Batey Cuchilla. We also conducted Bible school in Batey Cuchilla as well as in a church in neighboring Batey Seven, where we also attended Sunday worship. We worked alongside our Haitian brothers and sisters in Christ, played with and loved countless children, and witnessed first-hand how beautiful the Body of Christ can be. With God’s blessings, our work in Batey Cuchilla will have lasting benefits, both physically and spiritually, for generations to come.

But God’s work within us was even more profound than the work we accomplished. In the process of building a water house and leading Bible school, we gained so much more than we ever could have given. We learned about working together for God’s purpose, seeing Christ in others, and offering God’s grace and love to the least of these. We learned what humility looks like, how valuable every life is in



Oscar in his wheelchair and new clothes.

God’s eyes, the meaning of hospitality, and what true wealth is and what it is not.

We felt God’s presence move among us in small-group sharing, in worship services, in our heartfelt prayers, and in the fellowship we shared through Jesus Christ. We heard God speak to us without using words, in the smiles and hugs and kisses and horsey-back rides. We saw the face of God staring back at us through the eyes of the children of the bateys.

We saw the vastness and depth of Jesus’ love for us in a special needs child named Oscar — who, though he used to crawl in the dirt and filth to get from place to place, was washed, clothed in new attire, set upright in a wheelchair, and rolled through the main street of the batey to the joyful shouts and applause of our whole team and many in his community. This child was to us a living parable of how Jesus lifts us from the filth of our own sin, washes us in the waters of Baptism, clothes us in the righteousness of Christ, and sets us upright before God with a joyful welcome befitting a precious child of the King.

Many thanks to God for this opportunity and to our mission partners who made this mission possible. Please pray for the work God began through us in Batey Cuchilla, for Pastor Alberto and the parish in Batey Seven, for the ministry of John and Donna Bearden through Water at Work, and for the people we encountered who so deeply touched our lives.



Love knows no boundaries

Visionary Leadership

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

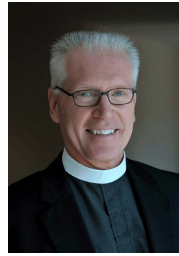
Following my workshop on visionary leadership during the Mission Festival, a number of people requested copies of my presentation. Unfortunately, my notes were not in a format that could be easily shared, so I have attempted to transform my notes into a brief presentation to share with you. The Scripture text for the workshop was the first chapter of Nehemiah. (Please take a moment to read that text.)

The nature of revelation is to expose what was hidden, to shed “light” on something that was concealed, to make known or provide insight. When something is revealed we see it! Jesus uses the contrast between light and darkness in a variety of ways. He is the light of the world. The Word of God in its entirety bears witness to that light. Holy Scripture exposes us to that light.

This light is critical for visionary leadership in ministry and is a light that brings true insight. In fact, I believe Jesus wants us to “see or envision” the nature of the Kingdom of Heaven He came to proclaim. It is not something accomplished with our physical eyes but through the “eyes of faith.”

Martin Luther suggests that when we read the Scripture and Jesus is coming to someone or they are coming to Him that we should put ourselves in the picture and see Jesus coming to us or see ourselves moving toward Jesus. Whatever benefit He offers to them, we should see Him offering that same benefit to us: forgiveness, healing, new life, guidance, direction, etc. This living Word is more than a history. It is the power of His presence available to us now. If we avoid reading the Scriptures in this way we will be so caught up in theological concepts, words and ideas that we fail to see anything.

In the first chapter of Nehemiah, one of Nehemiah’s brothers comes to him with a report from Jerusalem. Nehemiah heard the words of his brother’s report and it painted a picture. *“Those who survived the exile are back in the province and are*



From the Bishop

Bishop John Bradosky

in great trouble and disgrace. The walls of Jerusalem are broken down and the gates have been burned with fire.”

Can you imagine the image these words painted for Nehemiah? He saw something contrary to God’s will and trusted a promise from God’s Word. He believed God was calling him to enter into this vision trusting God’s promise for the rebuilding of Jerusalem and the return of God’s people, Israel. Through His word God planted in the heart of Nehemiah another vision of what Jerusalem would become again.

That vision became compelling for Nehemiah, and he began to think strategically about what he needed to do in order to be used for God’s purposes. He not only imagined those next steps, but he also took action to accomplish them. He used his position and his relationship with the King to make the trip and gain access to the city of Jerusalem. Once he arrived he evaluated the current reality and condition of the city and compared it with the clear vision for God’s intended future for Jerusalem. That “gap” between the current reality and God’s intended future enabled Nehemiah to create a plan for taking action.

Every vision will produce a strategy, goals and eventually hard work. If you miss this you are only a dreamer. I encourage you to read not only the first chapter of Nehemiah but the remaining chapters as well. It is important to see how the vision for rebuilding and reform developed and unfolded. The physical building was only a small part in the spiritual renewal, repentance and refocusing on

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God's Word and restored relationships that transformed the lives of God's people.

From both the story of Nehemiah and my own experience in ministry I offer the following seven essentials for visionary leadership in the Church:

1. Vision flows from God's Word into our current reality.
2. Vision requires prayerful reflection and the assurance of God's involvement and will.
3. Vision involves us, captivates us, motivates us, and compels us to act.
4. Vision must be shared with others. (If it is "God breathed" it will certainly be larger than any one individual.)
5. Vision requires hard work and roadblocks must be anticipated.
6. Vision is not to the exclusion of other opportunities along the way. Remember, your vision is just a part of God's vision but not the whole — responsiveness to God's Word and God's will may lead you to additional visions (see Nehemiah 5).
7. Vision is not something exclusive to pastors. The Holy Spirit is at work in the hearts and lives of all the faithful. A visionary leader can take the visions of others that are "God breathed" and sense God's calling to act. Trust the Lord. Trust faithful people. The more responsive you are to what others see for the future the more response they will be to your leadership.

Talking with others about that vision for the future is essential. When that vision is broadly shared amazing results will follow. (In another article I will share with you how that unfolded in one of the congregations I served.)

Without visionary leadership congregations often drift aimlessly. Absent a compelling direction many wander in the wilderness — lifeless — and perish. This is precisely what the Scriptures teach: "Without vision people perish!" (Proverbs 29:18).

In order to answer the question of what inhibits the development of visionary leadership and a compelling vision and direction for the future, the nature of physiological vision problems is helpful, even in the spiritual realm. Consider the analogy of these vision problems:

Near Sighted: Can see thing near but not far away. Spiritually we become so caught up in the immediacy of the present — the things right around us — that we can't see past them. The only direction is maintaining the status quo.

Far Sighted: Can see things far away but not close by. Spiritually we become so caught up in imagining the future that we fail to see the current reality that is so near. The vision doesn't provide direction, as leaders fail to discern a first step or any strategy that makes sense given the current reality.

Cataract: Cataracts produce cloudy vision. There is not enough light getting in. If the light comes from the Word of God, the spiritual issue for lack of a clear vision may stem from a lack of connection to the Word in both the individual and corporate life of the congregation.

Retinal Detachment or Macular Degeneration: These vision problems are not the result of the lack of light being received by the eye but the failure of the receptors in the eye to adequately communicate the image to the portion of the brain that enables us to make sense out of what we see. This could be compared to the spiritual problem of knowing what the Word says but failing to follow the guidance of the Holy Spirit to an obedient response. Our will is never an adequate substitute for God's will and mission.

Lazy Eye: The muscles don't work so that both eyes can focus. Tragically, this has become an all too common problem in the Church, the unwillingness to turn vision into action. We want everything God intends to be quick and easy. We want a less-demanding vision that won't require sacrifice, altered priorities or any change in lifestyle. The witness of Scripture does not support these assumptions. When the vision of the Kingdom that Jesus came to proclaim is planted in the hearts of His followers, lives are transformed, but it is never

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quick and easy. The values of current culture never match the culture of His Kingdom.

The only other kind of leadership beyond faithful visionary leadership is bad leadership. If you want to grow in capacity as a visionary leader, begin today by giving the Holy Spirit a chance to “paint” a clear image of every portion of Scripture you read. Create time in your schedule to pray and meditate on the Word so that a vision for you and those you serve emerges with clarity. Reserve time in every relationship for asking such questions and receiving responses from others. Mission and ministry require visionary leadership. Without it, people perish and congregations die.

“At that time Jesus, full of joy through the Holy Spirit, said, ‘I praise you, Father, Lord of heaven

*and earth, because you have **hidden these things from the wise and learned and revealed them to little children.** Yes, Father for this is what you were pleased to do. All things have been committed to me by my Father. No one knows who the Son is except the Father, and no one knows who the Father is except the Son and those to whom the Son chooses **to reveal him.**’ Then he turned to his disciples and said privately, **‘Blessed are the eyes that see what you see. For I tell you that many prophets and kings wanted to see what you see but did not see it, and to hear what you hear but did not hear it’**” (Luke 10: 21-24).*

May the Lord strengthen His vision in us for mission and ministry, making disciples of all nations!

With you following Him,

Bishop John Bradosky

NALC Pastors Conference is Feb. 14-16

The 2017 NALC Pastors Conference will be held Feb. 14-16 at the Crowne Plaza Universal Studios Hotel 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.



James Nestingen

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.

More information is available on the NALC website.

Clergy spouses are also welcome and encouraged to attend.

Church Planting Conference

You are invited to join Pastor Gemechis Buba, Pastor Trina Petersen, and the NALC Mission Teams for “Plant, Grow, Bloom — It’s Not an Option.” This church planting conference will be held in Fayetteville, Ga., starting at 9 a.m. on Jan. 5 and concluding at 3:30 p.m. on Jan. 6.

A \$25 non-refundable registration fee includes materials, lunch both days and transportation between the hotel and church. For details on hotel reservations, the conference site, and registration, please visit: <http://bit.ly/2cmbRVK>.

Mission Resources Update

Drops from the Well - Drops in Focus - MissionConnect

By NALC Renewal Team

A great gift of our Lord is the chance to drink deep from His living water. Reading the Word of God on a consistent basis is at the heart of our faithful obedience as followers of Jesus. We read His word to know Him better. And yet, for so many, this is a challenging task. Daily readings get lost in the shuffle of life.

Welcome to **Drops from the Well**. Utilizing the lectionary Gospel reading for Sundays, **Drops from the Well** can be delivered to your phone (U.S. phone numbers only) via a text message or to your email inbox.

More than a verse-a-day, **Drops from the Well** focuses on sending out one key point or Gospel kernel with the hope that you read and reflect on that drop each day of the week. Every morning at the breakfast table, pray this “drop” together as a family. Every night around the dinner table, use the “drop” as the lens through which you recap your day. You can share highs and lows around this verse, talk about a mistake you made and the way the Living Water, even in this little “drop,” helped you through.

As with most things, Version 2.0 builds upon the initial idea and makes it better. We would like to introduce you to **Drops in Focus**. The concept is similar, but the fruit is much riper. Perhaps you, like many, receive many text messages throughout the week. It doesn't take long for **Drops from the Well** to become buried under a long list of other messages. Our team continued to dream of ways to keep the Word right under our noses.

Drops in Focus utilizes the same technology, but instead of sending the verse in a “text,” it is delivered to your phone in a picture image each week. The goal is to save this image to your phone and set it as your lock screen image. We would like

to invite you to join us on this journey as Drops from the Living Water come into the focus of our lives.

MissionConnect is based on Psalm 107:2 — “Let the redeemed of the Lord tell their stories.” Living in Mission. Telling our stories. Throughout Scripture, we hear God calling and commanding us to “remember.” To remember that He is God and besides Him there is no other. We are called to remember the covenant and the faithfulness of God who keeps covenant. To remember the way the Lord our God has led us through the wilderness. And above all to remember Christ's body broken for us and blood shed for us for the forgiveness of sins. Each week MissionConnect shares a local, domestic, or global mission update and prayer request from across the NALC.

Finally, we share this update because Drops From the Well, Drops in Focus, and Mission Connect are being hosted by a new service provider. Current subscribers are receiving updates from a new phone number, but the service itself did not change. New subscribers can sign up for any or all of the services using the links below.

For Drops From the Well:

+ Text @dropswell to 81010.
+ Sign up for a weekly email at:
<https://www.remind.com/join/dropswell>.

For Drops in Focus (image with text):

+ Text @dropsfocus to 81010.
+ Sign up for a weekly email at:
<https://www.remind.com/join/dropsfocus>.

For MissionConnect:

Text @mconnect to 81010.
+ Sign up for a weekly email at:
<https://www.remind.com/join/mconnect>.
MissionConnect can be found on the NALC Network at: <http://nalcnetwork.com/missionconnect>.

‘Living and Growing in Kingdom of Jesus’ webinar training series

By Pastor Wendy Berthelsen

Living and Growing in the Kingdom of Jesus — and its application to mission, the church, church planting and each of our lives — is the focus of an exciting and inspirational ongoing webinar training series. Webinars will be led by Pastor Gemechis Buba, Assistant to the Bishop for Missions; Gary Pecuch of faithwebbing.com; and Pastor Brad Hales of Reformation Lutheran Church in Culpepper, Va., and other gifted leaders with expertise, wisdom, and experience on the various webinar topics.

Do you desire a deeper passion for Jesus, His Word, prayer and the power of His Holy Spirit? Do you long for a greater Kingdom fruitfulness in your life and in the life of your church? Do you wish for more vision for your church? Do you desire more direction on how specifically to live the kingdom life in all its fullness and wholeness? Do you need help and training for church planting and other mission ventures? We are praying that Jesus and the Holy Spirit will guide, empower, and accomplish all of this and more in your life!

Did you know that the word, *church*, in Biblical Greek literally means, “called out ones?” *Ones* — ordinary people like you — *called* by Jesus to go *out* transforming the world in Jesus’ name. This phrase — “called out ones” — tells us both the definition and goal of *church*.

Mission comes from Latin and literally means “sent out.” You are one of Jesus’ “called out ones.” You and I are all “missionaries,” called to proclaim Jesus’ good news and demonstrate it with power. So, let’s press on with Him!

In each of these webinars, we will be transformed by God’s Word and inspired by the Holy Spirit while contrasting the “kingdom” ways with “institutionalism” that can all too easily creep into our minds, churches, and lives. Some webinars will teach Scriptural foundations. Others will be “how to”

webinars focusing on a topic such as “faith webbing.” Others will be panels of guests, focusing upon practice and practical application as well as question and answers.

Our hope is that Jesus and the Holy Spirit would give birth to something new in you and in your church — new life, new vision and new mission.

For those who are unable to attend the webinar series live, recordings of the webinars will be posted online on the NALC Network in the group named “Mission Driven.” Visit nalcnetwork.com to join for updates, access to handouts, and to provide feedback.

Please know that the NALC Mission Office and Mission Teams are praying for the NALC:

Lord Jesus Christ, rule and reign in us and in our churches. Stir up and pour out your Holy Spirit and come! Awaken, enliven, renew and revive us. Make us into people who are passionate about you and your kingdom. Give us your passion for our broken world in your powerful name. Amen.

Here are the upcoming webinars and registration links:

Youth and Family Ministry - faithwebbing.com
Sept. 20 - 2 p.m. ET - Gary Pecuch
<http://bit.ly/2c8BZmT>

The Necessity of the Holy Spirit: Scriptural Teaching and Training - Part 2
Sept. 26 at 7:30 p.m. ET - Panel Discussion
<http://bit.ly/2c59jgk>

Renewing the Church Through Senior Ministry
Oct. 6 - 7:30 p.m. ET - Pastor Brad Hales
<http://bit.ly/1Umux8V>

Prayer: Scriptural Teaching and Training
Oct. 12 - 11 a.m. ET - Pastor Gemechis Buba
<http://bit.ly/2bWV3mB>

Youth and Family Ministry - faithwebbing.com

Oct. 18 - 2 p.m. ET - Gary Pecuch

<http://bit.ly/2bXBpez>

Prayer and Renewal/Revival - Part 2

Oct. 24 at 7:30 p.m. ET - Panel Discussion

<http://bit.ly/2cjrklh>

Renewing the Church Through Senior Ministry

Nov. 3 - 7:30 p.m. ET - Pastor Brad Hales

<http://bit.ly/1Umux8V>

Discipleship: Scriptural Teaching and Training

Nov. 9-10 - Pastor Gemechis Buba

Facebook Live from the NALC Deans' Meeting

Times and connection Information: TBA

Youth and Family Ministry - faithwebbing.com

Nov. 15 at 2 p.m. ET - Gary Pecuch

<http://bit.ly/2bGys2J>

Discipleship: Where the Rubber Meets the Road

Nov. 21 at 7:30 p.m. ET - Panel Discussion

<http://bit.ly/2bUHGTW>

Why Church Planting?

Dec. 7 at 11 a.m. ET - Pastor Gemechis Buba

<http://bit.ly/2bGwjxS>

Stewardship Emphasis

Continued from Page 1

so, Bishop Emeritus Paull Spring suggests a practice he recommended to congregations in his care as a synod bishop: simply commit to grow in giving to the NALC by at least 1 percent each year. Soon, your congregation will be growing in faith and stewardship and setting an example for each household within the congregation.

At the Convocation, the stewardship response and commitments expressed by congregations to increase their support of our beloved church body was heart-warming! Join your sister congregations and members of the NALC as we make use of the "Overflowing with Generosity" stewardship resources and give cheerfully in response to all God has given to us.



By Gary Pecuch

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.

We had a great experience in Anaheim for Lutheran Week. We did three main presentations and led two workshops throughout the week. We also talked to scores of people at our booth.

We will be contacting all of those who turned in a survey and asked to be placed on an interest distribution list.

Those interest lists include the possibility of the NALC hosting an Outcome-based Ministry Seminar in Columbus, Ohio for adults (which may include High School students), and an NALC Outcome-based Certification Program.

If you have an interest in being added to either of those lists email us at faithwebbing@gmail.com

Mark your calendars for the faithwebbing.com fall webinars:

- + Tuesday, Sept. 20 at 2 p.m. ET
- + Tuesday, Oct. 18 at 2 p.m. ET
- + Tuesday, Nov. 15 at 2 p.m. ET

The webinar links and topics will be sent out to all of those on the faithwebbing.com email distribution list and posted in the faithwebbing.com group page in the NALC Network

If you have an interest in receiving the updates contact us at faithwebbing@gmail.com or get connected through the NALC Network at nalcnetwork.com.

Webinars are free of charge to all NALC congregations.

The Pastor and the Congregation's Vision for Mission

What is a Pastor and What is Pastoral Leadership?

*"Where there is no vision, the people perish."
Proverbs 29:18*

Within the last few months, we have implemented a new congregational workshop in preparation for the call process. This exercise is intended to help congregations, during a time of transition, to benefit from intentional, helpful reflection upon the current reality of the congregation as a whole and lay leadership in particular.

Often a congregation is caught up in day-to-day and Sunday-to-Sunday activities so that we take little time for looking at ourselves and how we are functioning in an honest and clear manner. After a pastor leaves and before a new pastor is called is a natural time for this kind of evaluation and assessment.

One question in the workshop which then goes directly onto the congregational vacancy profile is "Does the congregation have a clear vision for mission — a clear and shared understanding of where God is leading you? If so, state it as succinctly as possible."

We've added this question to both the congregational workshop and the congregational vacancy profile because all too often, when asked this question, congregations and their lay leaders have no idea what's being asked. They give little thought to "vision for mission," have not thought of ministry in those terms, and have no answer to the question. The difficulty in congregations with leaders who have no shared vision is that everyone has their own vision, idea and agenda which are often competing.

I've shared before that when called to a congregation in Colorado Springs which had been fighting for 15 years (they were only 15 years in existence), part of the problem was that there had



Ministry Matters

Pastor David Wendel

Assistant to the Bishop
for Ministry and Ecumenism

been little pastoral leadership. In a congregation with many military officers, the worst possible situation is to have a lack of leadership, so that into the vacuum step many folks who believe they know clearly and without question what the vision of the congregation should be and what to do to get there. There is little more divisive and harmful to a congregation than leaders and others pulling in many different directions, each with their own ideas, intentions, and agendas.

Does this sound like a congregation you might know? A congregation where there is little unity and shared purpose — in short, a congregation without a "clear vision for mission and shared understanding of where God is leading you?"

When a congregation is beset by competing visions, it is common for individuals to try to gain power and authority, to take control and establish one's own vision and direction. Unfortunately, elected lay leaders often consider their election as the opportunity to set the vision and direction of "their" congregation, without involving the congregation as a whole, with all the leaders, so that there is truly a shared understanding and commitment to the vision for mission. And yes, pastors fall into that same trap. No wonder pastors and lay leaders so often find themselves in the midst of tension, conflict and power struggles.

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Pastoral leadership, as with any leadership in the congregation, doesn't mean the pastor or the council president determines the vision and direction of the congregation. Pastoral leadership means it is part of the pastor's responsibility, together with elected lay leaders and the congregation as a whole, to work together to seek God's will, realize it, and develop a vision for mission which is clear, appropriate and most of all, shared by pastor, lay leaders and congregation. Only then is it possible for all (or at least most) to move in the same direction, with one goal in mind.

How do the pastor and lay leaders engage the congregation in such discernment? The congregational workshop mentioned above (found at thenalc.org/call-process), may be used profitably by any congregation, as all congregations are or should be in transition — moving from who we are today to who God is leading us to be in the future He intends for us.

The workshop asks the question, "What is our current reality — who are we today?" Next we ask, "Who is God calling us to be as a congregation?" And once there is agreement on that, the question becomes, "Now how will we move toward that?" Make a list on whiteboard or newsprint with strategies and action steps that are clearly defined and measurable. Indicate who will be responsible for each — will it be the pastor, the council, or one of the committees or task forces? Revisit these regularly, perhaps at each council or congregational meeting to assess movement, adjust and keep focused.

The key to living into the vision for mission of the congregation is that it be shared, both in understanding the vision and living it out. What does this mean? It means making a list of strategies and action steps that involve all, not just the pastor, or the executive committee, or the council.

A word to the wise: pastors often cause themselves problems by thinking they are responsible for setting the vision based on their agenda, causing members of the congregation to assume, rightly so, that "this is the pastor's 'thing' — he/she should take care of it." This leads to frustration for pastors

who complain that "no one is supporting our ('my') vision!" It also leads to frustration and inactivity among leaders and members who don't share the vision, don't consider it "our" vision and believe the pastor is just "doing his/her own thing."

The key, again, is that the vision for mission be developed together and shared. Congregational leaders and members of the body get excited about and involved in a vision for mission they "own," rather than an agenda they believe has been imposed upon them.

"Where there is no vision, the people perish!" A congregation thrives when the pastor and leaders lead by hearing God's Word, giving all the opportunity to respond by heeding His Word and helping to discern and develop a vision that is faithful, and which all can embrace and support.

NALC Life Conference

The North American Lutheran Church is planning its inaugural Life Conference on Thursday, Jan. 26, at Trinity Lutheran Church in Warrenton, Va.

The conference will begin with lunch followed by two pro-life speakers and conclude with worship. Both clergy and laity are invited.

This should be a wonderful opportunity for the NALC to coordinate pro-life witness and charities for the coming year.

The next day features the Memorial for the Preborn service at 8:30 a.m. at DAR Constitution Hall in Washington D.C., where Bishop John Bradosky and the NALC Executive Council will be in attendance. Clergy should plan on vesting and participating in this service.

After the service, NALC Lutherans will join the March for Life on the Washington Mall at noon. The march ends around 3 p.m.

Those needing housing for the evenings of Jan. 26 or 27 or with questions about the event are encouraged to contact Pastor Dennis Di Mauro at 703-568-3346 or dennisdimauro@yahoo.com.



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NALC Contact Information

NALC Ministry Office

3500 Mill Run Drive
Hilliard, OH 43026-7770
888-551-7254
614-777-5709
bseifert@thenalc.org

NALC Administrative Office

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

Pastor David Wendel
dwendel@thenalc.org

Communications

Pastor Mark Ryman
mryman@thenalc.org

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

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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

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