

Lent is a time to slow down and examine yourself and your faith

A Lenten message from NALC Bishop John Bradosky

Dear Disciples of Jesus,

Dallas Willard in his book, *The Divine Conspiracy*, begins with a story of a pilot. He writes: "Recently a pilot was practicing high-speed maneuvers in a jet fighter. She turned the controls for what she thought was a steep ascent — and flew straight into the ground. She was unaware that she had been flying upside down. ... This is a parable of human existence in our times ... most of us as individuals, society as a whole, live at high-speed, and often with no clue to whether we are flying upside down or right-side up. Indeed, we are haunted by a strong suspicion that there may be no difference — or at least that it is unknown or irrelevant" (pp. 1-2).

What the pilot experienced in her disorientation has everything to do with the speed of the aircraft. Some dismiss his illustration as improbable because they have been upside down and have experienced the sensation of blood rushing to their head as well as the resulting pressure. You should be able to tell if you are upside down. However, what they fail to consider is the effect of speed. When speed is producing a gravitational force greater than the normal gravitational pull you no longer have the sensation of being upside down. Because of the speed, the blood is being pushed to the back of

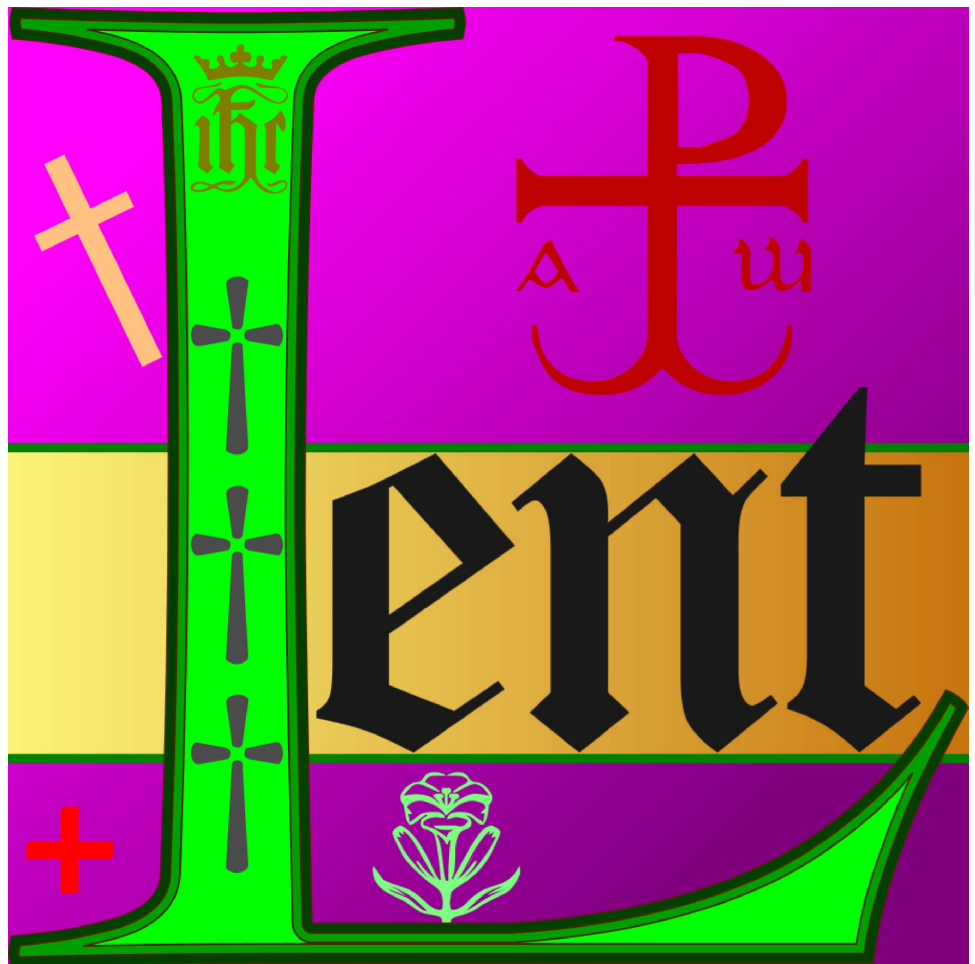


Image by Philip Barrington from openclipart.org.

your head as you move forward. Without reference to other clues regarding your orientation, you could be easily convinced that pulling back on the controls would cause you to climb, when in fact it brings about your demise.

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When we as individuals or collectively as the Church expend all our time and energy attempting to keep up with the busyness of cultural expectations and trends, moving at the same speed, we too may become just as disoriented and unaware that we may be flying upside down. Thinking that the next maneuver will cause us to soar, we crash and burn.

The word “Lent” refers not only to the lengthening of days, but the Latin form means to move slowly. The opposite of *rapido* (rapidly) is *lento* (slowly).

When we slow down, it is much easier to determine our direction. Some consider that the teaching of Jesus turns the world upside down. They refer to the great reversals in Jesus’ teaching: The first are last and the last are first. The wealthy can live in spiritual poverty while the poor have far greater spiritual wealth. Those who appear weak are really strong. With a remnant God defeats powerful nations. Beginning with a small band of disciples, the Gospel was spread throughout the entire world.

Perhaps the greater truth is not that Jesus is turning the world upside down, but that we are living our lives inverted. His teaching proclaims life from the Kingdom of Heaven perspective, which is truly right-side up!

Lent is a perfect time to examine our worldview. Are we focused on Christ and His Kingdom? Are we keeping it in full view, insuring our life is lived right-side up?

There are many who continue to live inverted lives, filled with skepticism rather than faith in Jesus, disputing the words of Scripture by substituting for its truth the narrow and limited views of human reason, preserving our own powerless reality while denying the power of His Kingdom.

This Lenten season is a time to slow down and affirm our faith in the one Lord Jesus Christ who, as Paul points out to the Colossians, holds the entire world together and possesses all wisdom and knowledge. This Jesus not only proclaimed His Kingdom but opened it to all who believe in Him.

Lent is an opportunity to examine the content of our faith and the implications of confessing

Christ as The Way, The Truth and The Life — our only hope.

Our sin and brokenness have caused some to abandon orthodox faith and deny our need for a Savior. The speed and fervor of our lives easily cause us to engage in self-justification or live in denial of our sin.

Lent is slowing down to take time for honesty and transparency regarding the truth of our sin and our need for confession and repentance.

In Christ, we find hope when we have lost our identity — our “saltiness.” In Christ there is still hope when our faith barely brightens the room where we are and is no longer shining brightly for others to see.

In Christ, there is hope and forgiveness even when we have slandered and abused others with our words — destroying life with the bullets from our tongues; when we live in broken relationships consumed by injustice.

In Christ, there is still hope and forgiveness for those engaged in sexual sin, promiscuity, adultery, pornography, or pedophilia — those preoccupied and enslaved by their own pleasure-seeking.

In Christ, there is still hope and forgiveness for those whose marriage vows are broken, for those who lie, deceive, swear falsely and break their word. In Christ, there is hope and forgiveness for those who want to seek revenge and return evil with more evil.

Lent is a time to slow down and reflect on our own actions and behaviors, to acknowledge and confess our sins, confident that no sin is left uncovered by the cross of Jesus Christ.

Lent is a perfect time to permit a renewed faith and repentance to be expressed in reformed thoughts, actions and behaviors, through the transforming power of the grace of Jesus Christ.

In a reflection on John 15:10 — “If you obey my commands, you will remain in my love, just as I have obeyed my Father’s commands and remain in his love” — Luther writes:

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“So there are two parts of Christian teaching that we must emphasize daily. Neither faith nor works can be ignored. For when faith isn’t preached — when no one explains who we are, joined to Christ and become branches in Him — then everyone resorts to their own works. On the other hand, when we teach only about faith, this lopsidedness leads to false Christians. These people praise faith, are baptized and even call themselves Christians but they don’t show any fruit or power. That’s why it is so difficult to preach. No matter how I preach something goes wrong. Someone always goes off on a tangent. If I don’t preach about faith, the result will be useless and hypocritical works. If I only emphasize faith no one does any good works. The result is either useless, faithless do-gooders or believers who don’t do any good works. So we must preach the message to those who accept both faith and works. We must preach to those who want to remain in the vine, put their trust in Christ and put their faith into action in their everyday lives.”

This life in Christ, the true vine, is life in His Kingdom. It is life lived right-side up. It is a life filled with love.

Lent is a season for taking time to love.

This is not just love in general as a concept or emotion, but love that is lived out in how we treat our neighbor. It is a matter of loving our nearest neighbor — our spouse and children, our extended family, those with whom we live and talk and work, those with whom we are angry and those who have treated us unjustly, our enemies.

Dallas Willard points out that we often define our neighbor as that class of people who are just like us. We select them as objects of our love, leaving the rest to be “lovingly” ignored. Jesus rejects that question of “Who is my neighbor?” The question is now “To whom will I be a neighbor?” We make a neighbor of someone by caring for them, loving them with the same love we have received from Christ Jesus.

Each day there will be people along the way who will turn out to be our neighbor as we decide to lovingly care for them. This love restrains itself from revenge, exceeds the expectations of the beloved

and gives freely and abundantly. This love for neighbor as Jesus defines it includes even those who are our enemies, those who persecute us and those who have no capacity to love us in return.

This is life in the Kingdom. It only appears to be upside down because of our sin and our patterns of behavior to which we have become so accustomed that it seems normal to live life at such a fast pace that we have no time for reflection.

As Luther points out, it is only possible in life lived as branches grafted on to the life-giving vine, Jesus Christ, through faith in Him. Jesus said, “No good tree produces bad fruit, nor any bad tree good fruit. ... The good person from the good treasured up in their heart produces what is good.” The branches produce the fruit not of their own will or design but because of the vine whose gracious love flows through them. This is the life the season of Lent gives us the opportunity to rediscover.

With you I am slowing down this Lenten season to experience life again, right-side up in Christ.

Executive Council affirms annual Convocations

At its January meeting, the NALC Executive Council acted on a resolution from the Minkota Mission District asking about reducing the frequency of NALC Convocations.

The Executive Council decided that it is best to retain annual Convocations because the NALC is still a young church and benefits from opportunities for members to gather and to continue to get to know one another.

Mission District Deans also discussed the frequency of Convocations at their November meeting in response to the resolution from the Minkota Mission District. The Deans overwhelmingly supported annual NALC Convocations for the present time.

Changes to Bishop election process to be considered by Convocation

Changes to the process used to elect the Bishop of the North American Lutheran Church will be considered by the 2017 NALC Convocation.

A task force that has been studying the NALC's procedure for electing a bishop released a report and seven recommendations regarding changes in NALC election procedures. Three of the seven recommendations require amendments to the NALC Constitution.

The NALC Executive Council approved the amendments proposed by the task force and will forward them to the 2017 Convocation for consideration. If approved, the amendments would need to be ratified by NALC congregations.

The most significant change is the removal of language in the Constitution that allowed Convocation delegates to nominate a candidate for bishop from the floor of the Convocation.

"We recommend that candidates for election to the office of Bishop be limited to those identified by the Nominating Committee; *i.e.* that the practice of allowing nominations from the floor of the Convocation be discontinued. This recommendation represents the majority opinion of the task force: four task force members supported the discontinuation of nominations from the floor; two members supported the current procedure which allows floor nominations," the task force's first recommendation states.

"There was a diversity of opinion within the task force, generating robust and respectful discussion and debate. While there were a variety of preferences as to electoral procedures, there was unanimity on the desire to discern God's choice in any election; and there was unanimous agreement that the Holy Spirit does not require any one particular procedure to successfully govern the church's deliberations, but is more than capable of using a variety of procedures to accomplish His will," the task force report states.

Pastor Carl Rasmussen of First Lutheran Church in Kirkland, Ill., chair of the task force, explained the rationale for discontinuing floor nominations for bishop: "The task force majority believes floor nominations give delegates insufficient time to pray and reflect about candidates so nominated; and may place lay delegates at a particular disadvantage, since lay members of the church have limited opportunity to become acquainted with NALC pastors other than their own."

Pastor Alden Towberman, of St. Mark Lutheran Church in Butler, Pa., was one of the task force members opposing the proposed change. He authored a minority report.

"Our present Constitution provides the greatest opportunity for good order and the work of the Holy Spirit to guide us, even in surprising ways that are consistent with the intent of Scripture, by providing for both nominations for the Office of Bishop to be received before and from the floor of the Convocation when an election is held," Pastor Towberman wrote in the Minority Report.

Amendments are also proposed changing the date when biographical information on the candidates for all offices must be made available to members of the NALC from 90 days to 60 days prior to the Convocation.

The last date for nominations for Executive Council and Court of Adjudication would change from 45 to 40 days. Bishop nominations would need to be submitted 60 days in advance with no additional nominations allowed. The Nominating Committee is required to include all candidates nominated for bishop on the ballot.

The task force was the result of action by the 2015 NALC Convocation calling for a study of the bishop election procedure. Three Mission District Deans and three members of the Executive Council were appointed to the task force by Bishop John Bradosky and the Executive Council.

Nominations open for Executive Council and Court of Adjudication

Nominations are now being received for positions to be elected at the 2017 NALC Convocation Aug. 9-11 in Nashville, Tenn.

The Convocation will elect two members of the NALC Executive Council (one lay person and one pastor) and two members of the Court of Adjudication, all to four-year terms.

Nominations are also welcome for the 2018 Nominating Committee. Names received will be forwarded to the NALC Executive Council, which will propose a slate of Nominating Committee members to the Convocation for confirmation.

Brief descriptions of the duties of each position are available on the NALC website.

Congregations and individuals are welcome to nominate individuals for any of the open positions. Please submit nominations by May 1. This will enable the committee to meet the constitutional deadline to make biographical information available to NALC members.

To submit a nomination, complete the Nomination Form available on the NALC website (under the Convocation tab) and return it to the Nominating Committee. Nominees will be asked to complete the Nominee Biographical Form (also available online) and to provide a photo for publication with the biographical information.

Questions may be addressed to the Nominating Committee at nominations@thenalc.org.

Canadian Rockies Theological Conference *Auschwitz and Addis: The Church and Persecution*

“Auschwitz and Addis: The Church and Persecution” is the theme of the 2017 Canadian Rockies Theological Conference May 9-12 in Canmore, Alberta.

Featured speakers are the Rev. Dr. Gemechis Buba, NALC Assistant to the Bishop for Missions, and the Rev. Dr. Paul Hinlicky, Tise Professor of Lutheran Studies at Roanoke College in Salem, Va.

The conference will consider how the Christian church has in the past become complicit in movements that have led to the persecution of innocent people by those who claim allegiance to Jesus Christ. Dr. Hinlicky will speak about what Christians can learn from the rise of Nazism in Germany. Dr. Buba will address the situation in Ethiopia under the Communist Derg.

The conference is held at the Coast Canmore Hotel in Canmore, Alberta — just outside of the beautiful Banff National Park.



Gemechis Buba



Paul Hinlicky

More information on the conference is available on the Canadian Rockies Theological Conference Facebook page or on the NALC website. You may also contact the conference organizers, Pastor Karl Johnsen at karl@calvarylutheran.ca or Pastor Phillip Gagnon at pphil1961@icloud.com.



Professor James Nestingen gave two lectures on Luther's theology of vocation and two presentations on the lectionary Scripture readings for Lent and Easter.



Bishop John Bradosky blessed oil for use in congregations. He also presided at a renewal of ordination vows during the service.

2017 NALC Pastors Conference

February 14-16 - Orlando, Florida



Pastor Nathan Yoder presented a summary of "Church, Order, and Ministry," a paper prepared by Dr. David Yeago in consultation with the NALC's Church and Ministry Task Force. The pastors in attendance were given the opportunity to respond to the paper, which will serve as a resource for the NALC's continuing study of the doctrine of the ministry. Many pastors expressed appreciation at being involved early in the study process.



Bishop John Bradosky presided at a meeting of the NALC Ministerium, addressing a variety of matters facing the church.



Pastor David Wendel, Assistant to the Bishop for Ministry and Ecumenism, led the Ministerium in praying the daily office and other services throughout the conference. He also addressed several items during the meeting of the Ministerium.



Pastor Mark Chavez, NALC General Secretary, addressed 2017 Convocation and other items.



Pastor Steve King of Sola Publishing described a variety of new Holy Family resources.



Pastor Eric Riesen shared an update on the NALC Life-to-Life Discipleship Task Force.



Participants in the 2017 NALC Pastors Conference posed for a group photo.

Thank you from some NALS students

The North American Lutheran Seminary and North American Lutheran Church are very grateful for the partnership that we share through the outpouring of gifts upon our seminarians.

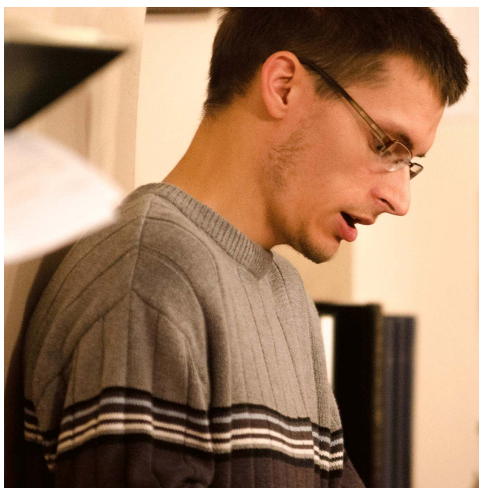
Currently, through the NALC Theological Education Fund and Trinity School for Ministry, every full-time residential student is eligible for a full-tuition scholarship. Many of our students would not be able to attend the NALS without this assistance.

In our students' own words, we would like to thank those who have donated money:



Caleb Douglas

"We truly could not be here at NALS-Trinity without such immense and generous financial support. Thank you again for your kindness and generosity in giving, that we might be made worthy of our calling and faithfully bear witness to Christ Jesus in this world." — M. Caleb Douglas, M. Div. Class of 2017.



Chris Boyd

"Thank you for offering me the gracious gift of a scholarship for my entire tuition this year. It is a great blessing to know that there are those ... outside of my family and my immediate friends who truly wish for my success and who would so generously give a gift as amazing as the one you have given me." — Chris Boyd, M. Div. Class of 2018.



Matthew Vatalare

"Ever since my experiences in high school, I have strived to

follow God's call to ministry. In this past year at the North American Lutheran Seminary-Trinity School for Ministry I have continued to learn the theology of the Lutheran faith, Lutheran preaching ... With the help of your donation, I am able to strive even more to follow God's call on my life here at NALS/Trinity." — Matthew Vatalare, M. Div. Class of 2017.

The mission of the North American Lutheran Seminary includes forming pastors and church leaders for the NALC "who will faithfully preach, teach, and live God's eternal truth, through Word and Sacrament, proclaiming Christ's cross and resurrection, making disciples who will renew and grow the church in Christ's name."

These scholarships and support for the NALC Theological Education Fund are vital to our continued work. Our students are blessed by this support, and they will be a blessing to the NALC for years to come.

Gifts to support the seminary and NALC scholarships should be sent to:
NALC Theological Education Fund
2299 Palmer Drive, Suite 220
New Brighton, MN 55112-2202

You can learn more about the NALS or donate online at thenals.org.



NALS
North American Lutheran Seminary

Speakers are announced for 2017 Braaten-Benne Lectures in Theology

Speakers for the annual Carl E. Braaten and Robert D. Benne Lectures in Theology have been announced. The annual theological conference, held prior to the NALC Convocation, is scheduled for Aug. 8-9 in Nashville, Tenn.

Featured speakers for the 2017 lectures are Dr. Don Collett, Dr. Gordon Isaac, Dr. Paul Hinlicky, Dr. David Luy, and Dr. David Yeago.

The theme of the 2017 lectures is “Savior and Lord: Lectures on the Work of Christ.”

“‘Christ Jesus became for us wisdom from God, and righteousness and sanctification and redemption’” (1 Corinthians 1:30). Picking up from last year’s well-received series on the person of Christ, this year’s Braaten-Benne Lectures in Theology will invite attendees into a consideration of the inexhaustible riches of Christ’s work. The canon of Scripture, the tradition of Christian thought, and Lutheranism’s responsibility to the worldwide church will inform our presentations and discussions. Together we’ll explore the creation-changing accomplishment of Jesus — the faithful, crucified, and risen God-man — from historical, systematic, and pastoral perspectives,” explained the Rev. Dr. Amy Schiffrin, President of the North American Lutheran Seminary.

Dr. Don Collett is Associate Professor of Old Testament at Trinity School for Ministry. He has his Ph.D. from the University of St. Andrews in Scotland. He is a graduate of Westminster Seminary and Montana State University.

Dr. Paul Hinlicky is Tise Professor of Lutheran Studies at Roanoke College in Salem, Va. He is the author of several books, including *Luther and the Beloved Community: A Path for Christian Theology after Christendom*.

Dr. Gordon Isaac is Berkshire Associate Professor of Advent Christian Studies and Dean of Chapel at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary. The focus of his masters’ degrees and doctoral work was on Martin Luther. He is the



Don Collett



Paul Hinlicky



Gordon Isaac



David Luy



David Yeago

author of *Left Behind or Left Befuddled: The Subtle Dangers of Popularizing the End Times*.

Dr. David J. Luy is Assistant Professor of Biblical and Systematic Theology at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School. He is the author of *Dominus Mortis: Martin Luther on the Incorruptibility of God in Christ*.

Dr. David Yeago is Professor of Systematic Theology and Ethics for the North American Lutheran Seminary and Trinity School for Ministry. He is the author of *The Apostolic Faith: A Catholic and Evangelical Introduction to Christian Theology* (forthcoming from Eerdmans).

Mary Bates to serve as Director of NALC Disaster Response

The NALC Disaster Task Force is pleased to announce that Mary Bates is the new Disaster Coordinator and Director of NALC Disaster Response. Mary joins our incredibly dedicated team, who serve hundreds of households recovering from natural disasters every year.

Mary brings an extensive background in disaster-response work, most recently as Director of Lutheran Social Services Ohio Disaster Response.

A native of Ohio, Mary attended the Ohio State University in Columbus, Ohio, and has worked in the field of disaster response for over 20 years. She is a trainer of FEMA courses and has developed the current disaster training program for NALC Disaster Response.

“On behalf of the NALC Disaster Task Force we are excited to have Mary join us and look forward to the continued growth of NALC Disaster Response under her leadership,” said Pastor Dave McGettigan, previous Disaster Coordinator.

“The opportunities to increase our capacity to mobilize volunteers in assisting survivors in response and recovery operations are vast. The Disaster Task Force is committed to continuing to build our capacity and engagement in disaster areas,” he said.

As we welcome Mary, we also want to thank and recognize Pastor David McGettigan who led this organization with distinction. David will be staying on as a consultant to assist with the transition to



Mary Bates

ensure NALC Disaster Response is prepared should a need arise.

NALC Disaster Response is a voluntary organization that provides natural disaster preparedness, response, and recovery services nationwide. It has brought comfort to disaster survivors by training and mobilizing thousands of volunteers to help communities after floods, tornadoes, and other natural disasters.

Rooted in the core Christian values of the NALC — Christ Centered, Mission Driven, Traditionally Grounded, and Congregationally Focused — NALC Disaster Response offers help to all people

affected by disaster on the basis of need and welcomes anyone willing to volunteer and serve others.

The collective work of NALC Disaster Response is an effort to share the love of Jesus Christ through training, equipping, and leading volunteers to assist disaster survivors in the spirit of goodwill and creating mutual respect among all people.

You can learn more about NALC Disaster Response and find disaster response resources at thenalc.org/nalc-disaster-response.

Financial gifts may be given online or sent to NALC Disaster Response; 2299 Palmer Drive, Suite 220; New Brighton MN 55112-2202.

For more information, please contact Mary Bates, NALC Disaster Response Director, at 740-509-1132 or disasterresponse@thenalc.org.

Meet our new global workers

Stephen and Rachel Katterhenrich serve with Wycliffe in Tanzania

Stephen and Rachel Katterhenrich are new NALC global workers serving in Tanzania with Wycliffe Bible Translators. They offer this introduction:

We were both blessed to have grown up in Grove City, Ohio, involved in youth groups and in supportive Christian families, of which St. John's Lutheran Church in Grove City played a major role. Through these we learned the value of knowing and serving God as well as serving others.

Stephen went to Taylor University in Indiana and studied Christian Education and Biblical Studies. He developed a passion for the Word of God. Rachel studied Spanish and French at Hope College in Michigan and developed a passion for languages and culture.

We first heard about Wycliffe Bible Translators while we were in college. Rachel met a couple who had worked with Wycliffe in South America who told us about the work of Bible translation. We each attended a one week course on translation and loved it.

Eventually we realized that our passions aligned and pointed toward doing translation with Wycliffe. We are currently working with a translation team in Tanzania, helping to begin the process of Bible translation for groups that don't yet have God's Word in their language. We can't wait to see what God will do through us and others in Tanzania!

In Tanzania, we will be analyzing language, developing alphabets, and helping to train others in linguistic principles. Most of the 40 languages in Tanzania where translation is still needed do not yet have a written form. The majority have never been analyzed or documented.



Rachel and Stephen Katterhenrich with their children, Scott and Hope.

After six years in Tanzania, we have recently been in the United States on "home assignment" where we welcomed our new baby, Scott, into the family to join his 3-year-old sister, Hope. It has been a blessing to have time to visit our partner congregations, have Sabbath rest, spend time with family and friends, receive additional training and education, and to officially affiliate with the North American Lutheran Church.

We will be working alongside members of local language communities, helping to analyze and document their languages. The ultimate goal is to see them translate the Bible into their own language. Wycliffe is partnering with many other organizations and churches to see this task accomplished for each language group which still needs God's Word.

For more information on the NALC's newest global workers or to adopt the Katterhenrich Family, please visit thenalc.org/global-workers or www.wycliffe.org/partner/Katterhenrich.

Boundless Joy

By Mim Nellermoe
NALC Global Worker

What does it take to show the love of our Father?

It takes time, energy, and whatever you have to share. I had a rare opportunity to show love to a special autistic 10-year-old girl named Yingying and her little brother Anxiang! It is my favorite day of 2017!

Yingying and Anxiang live in the rural poor area outside of Xinyang, China, about an hour and a half out past the rice patties and tea tree terraces. So it took Amin and me a couple hours of walking, riding a bus, walking again, riding in another bus, and then traveling in local cars to get to the tea fields and rice fields where some of our poorest stay-behind children live.



This is my third year knowing Yingying, and she was so excited to see us. It brings me great joy just to see her anticipation. I know she feels the love of our Father! We do a lot of playing, talking, listening, and looking. The looks of love are the same in any language. She was literally jumping for joy.

We use the tools of warm clothing — hats, gloves, socks — games like fast track, Tiddlywinks and animal balloons to build a bridge to cross over to her heart. If a picture is worth a thousand words,



then the story told with images is a beautiful work of art!

Her father was so thankful. He seems to know that we give them dignity. My colleague and sister Amin showed sweet and tender dignity as she boiled some water and gently washed the kids hands and face, maybe for the first time in weeks. She quietly trimmed their mud-caked nails while I played a fast track game with their other hand. They are not a charity case, they're just people who need a leg up.

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The father was a fantastic cook. We tried not to be there when it was mealtime, but he insisted that we stay and that he make something for us. I'm sure he cooked all the food they were planning to eat during their two-week-long spring festival in that one meal. We are King's kids, so we humbly accepted and are grateful for the family's hospitality.



Thank you to all who sponsor us in China so that we can make a difference for our Father! If a picture is worth a thousand words, we hope you enjoy the pictures and the many stories they tell!

To adopt the Nellermoes or to learn more about their work, visit thenalc.org/global-workers.



Update from Didi and Serafina Panzo

NALC Global Workers in Democratic Republic of the Congo

On the night of Dec. 26, strong rains fell all over the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Most of the rainwater ran into the Congo River, causing a big flood in the city of Boma and taking many lives and homes.

There was crying everywhere, because the death toll was around 700 and more than 2,000 houses and buildings were lost, including the Lutheran elementary school. Many of the victims have no place to stay, so they spend their days and nights outside. No humanitarian action is visible, and people are facing depression.

Through the Christian Community Development Network and the Confessional Lutheran Church, we are providing counseling to some families, but the need for temporary housing still exists and we have no place for them to stay. Your prayers are needed.

Political Chaos in the DRC

Political unrest surged in the DRC starting Dec. 19. The opposition and the majority exchanged words, and fighting was so intense in the city of Boma that many lives were lost. Houses were broken into and young folks engaged in robbing houses and vandalizing the cars of deputies and those in government positions. All this happened because the president of the republic overstayed his time in power. The situation is calm for now but prayers are requested for an effective peace.



Feeding Orphans

We thank God for the opportunity we had to feed 10 young orphans on Dec. 31. These boys frequently come to our doors to ask for food, money and much more. We share with them what we have and are able to give. December 31st was a touching day as we heard each child's story. One of them said, "I am not an orphan because God is my father. My mother passed away and my biological father abandoned me, but God is always there." It was very touching. The others didn't want to share their situations but instead shared who they want to be in the future and the talents that they possess. We spent a good evening with them and gave each child a small soccer ball as a gift. To God be the glory. Continue to pray that God may provide for their needs. We shared Jesus with them and we will continue to gather for prayer once a week.

Deaths within Confessional Lutheran Church

Two veteran pastors of the Confessional Lutheran Church in Boma passed away recently. Each was diagnosed with a terminal disease and remained in the hospital until the day that God called him home. The Rev. Muaka died on Jan. 16. While in the hospital, his house was destroyed during the flooding and everything was lost. The church must

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Are you called to serve in Ethiopia?

The World Mission Prayer League serves as a sending agency and ministry partner of the NALC. As our relationship continues to grow in sending more and more global workers to Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, there is a growing need to assist with education for the children of our workers.

While many options are available, we are working specifically with Bingham Academy. One incredible way to significantly support the NALC's global workers is to find people who are called as teachers, administrators, and a variety of other positions with Bingham Academy. Serving in this capacity will allow for a significant reduction in tuition for our global workers and their families, and a unique opportunity to serve as a called person.

Bingham Academy is an international Christian school in Addis Ababa. With over 300 students in Grades K-12, they provide quality Christian education for the children of missionaries, Christian workers, business people, and others in Ethiopia.

Bingham Academy has been serving the mission and international community of Ethiopia since the 1940s. Beginning with one teacher and 14 students, the school has grown to have over 320 students and an international staff.

Bingham Academy is located in the outer suburbs of Addis Ababa, a dynamic and rapidly growing city that is the heart of not only Ethiopia, but arguably Africa itself. Addis Ababa hosts the headquarters of the African Union, the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa, regional headquarters for other agencies of the United Nations, over 80 embassies, and numerous non-governmental organizations and international corporations.

Available full-time positions include:

Administration: Director, Interim Director, Recruitment Coordinator, Development Director, Home School Program Coordinator, Curriculum Coordinator, Facilities Manager.

Elementary: Teacher/Coach, Music Teacher, General Elementary/Primary Teacher.

Secondary Teachers: Chemistry, IT, English, Business/Economics, Art, General Science, Spanish, French, Biology, Math.

Learning Support: ESL Teacher, Special Education Teacher.

Specialist: Creative Arts Director, Teacher/Librarian.

For more information contact the NALC Missions Office at jbrockman@thenalc.org or 614-777-5709 or visit <https://binghamacademy.recruiterbox.com>.

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help the widow to find a place to stay. The Rev. Tsumbu passed away on Jan. 22.

Pray for the two widows who are left behind with nothing and face a life of poverty. Pray also for the Confessional Lutheran Church as they grieve the loss of their two faithful servants.

Prayer Requests

+ Pray that God will make provision as we consider buying or renting a facility that can be used as a shelter and orphanage.

+ Pray for those who lost their homes and loved ones during the flooding.

+ Pray for the DRC government to reach an agreement for future elections as a way to achieve peace in the country.

+ Pray for God's provision for our ministry fund as we consider engaging in some crucial programs. Also the provision to replace our generator that was stolen.

+ Pray for peace and safety.

+ Pray also for the leadership of the Confessional Lutheran Church, for church growth and stability.

Updated Mission Resources available

By NALC Mission Teams

We want to continue doing our best to serve you! We are working very hard to provide the resources that congregations and leaders have requested. Before we take the next step, we wanted to make sure these resources are up to date and exactly what's needed. To accomplish this, we are asking for your assistance. In addition, we are offering some new training webinars.

Mission Trips: Our congregations are involved in diverse ministries. A common tool used by youth groups and other congregational ministries is a short-term mission trip. If this is something your Mission District or congregations are involved in (whether domestic or international), would you mind clicking on the link and sharing the information with us? It will only take a few minutes of your time, and then we will be able to make this available to all of the congregations in the NALC!

Link: <http://bit.ly/2g2U3mp>.

Mission Finder: One of the great challenges is keeping information up to date and helping people form relationships. If your congregation has started supporting **or participating** in any new ministries or missions in the last year, **please click on this link**

Annual Reports from congregations

NALC congregations are reminded to complete their annual reports to the North American Lutheran Church. If congregations complete this report, the NALC will be able to report accurate membership statistics.

A link to the Congregational Report form will be sent to congregations by email in early March. Contact the NALC Administrative Office at 651-633-6004 or nalc.mnoffice@thenalc.org if your congregation do not receive the report or if you have any questions about how to complete it.

and let us know (5 minutes or less).

Link: <http://bit.ly/2fIB0JK>

Webinar: Life-to-Life Discipleship with Pastor Gemechis Buba – Tuesday, March 7, 11 a.m. ET.

Link: <http://bit.ly/2mcBsDx>



By Gary and Laurie Pecuch

The next faithwebbing.com webinar will be at 2 p.m. ET on Tuesday, March 21. Webinars are free. All you need to do is join in.

Next topics: Developing an attitude of gratitude, being visionary in your thinking and spending time with people the way Jesus did. Here's the link: <https://attendee.gotowebinar.com/register/5080697376034635010>

There will also be webinars on the third Tuesday of April and May at 2 p.m. ET.

The webinars continue to walk through the Faith Skills listed in the *What's In Your Bag?* book as well as the Faith Skills list. Need a list? Email Gary and Laurie at faithwebbing@gmail.com.

Then mark your calendars for the Youth Ministry Adult Training Conference to be held Aug. 8-9 (prior to the 2017 NALC Convocation) at the Sheraton Music City Hotel in Nashville, Tenn. Registration will take place through thenalc.org website in conjunction with Convocation registration. We are hoping to have all Mission Districts represented.

Gary and Laurie Pecuch have served in youth ministry for more than 30 years at St. John's Lutheran Church in Grove City, Ohio. They serve the NALC as youth ministry consultants. They provide a variety of resources for NALC congregations free of charge through their website, faithwebbing.com.

Mission District to offer summer camp

By Pastor Nila Cogan

Many of us have fond memories of spending time at a church camp during our childhood. It was a time of making new friends, getting out in nature, and discovering that we could worship outside of a church building. For many of us it was the time for growing closer to God and first hearing a call to serve our Lord.

Camping has always been an important aspect of growing up Lutheran and it became a concern in recent years that camps affiliated with our previous church bodies were not promoting orthodox Christian teachings. This was a concern in the Mid-Northeast Mission District.

One of the congregations in the Laurel Mountains east of Pittsburgh, Pa., decided that they would offer their campus to be the location for a camp for the Mission District. Their land includes a grove with a large enclosed building used as an eating and gathering area with a large kitchen that could serve as a mess hall, a campfire area, a large meadow where many tents could be set up, along with other out buildings, and a lovely outdoor chapel set back in the woods. There is also a volleyball court, a baseball field, and a basketball court, along with plenty of space to play games like Capture the Flag.

The first year of camp was 2015 with the theme “Going Against the Flow” and discussions were based on where God is when bad things happen. Part of the camp was a field trip to the Flight 93 Memorial (the plane that went down on Sept. 11, 2001). Our first year had 25 campers.

Last year we increased to 40 campers with the theme “Rooted in Christ.” We looked at how we are all connected as part of God’s family and how one person’s actions can affect many others. We visited the Johnstown Flood National Park and the Flood Museum in the City of Johnstown and finished that day with a trip to a local dam for swimming and recreation.

During last year’s camp a name was chosen for the camp, and since we sleep in tents the name is



In “Tents” Lutheran Church Camp. In many ways the camp is intense.

For the first two years the camp was only two and a half days long, but the youth requested that we extend the camp time. This year the camp will be four days — starting on Monday morning, July 24, and ending Thursday afternoon, July 27. The theme will be “Living Water - Living Bread” as we focus on the sacraments and a little on the Reformation. Our trip this year (we travel by bus) will be to Ohiopyle, a beautiful state park in the Laurel Highlands of Pennsylvania, for white-water rafting, hiking, etc. We are planning a service time at a local food pantry and thrift shop. There also will be opportunity for swimming during the week. Since the camp is extended to four days, showers are being installed at the camp as a necessary addition.

There will be a guest speaker at this year’s camp. Brian Wallace, author and well-known speaker at Lutheran Youth Encounter events for many years and a speaker for Quakes for Life Promotions, will be bringing his wisdom and humor.

The Mid-Northeast Mission District is inviting all NALC congregations to join them this summer for In “Tents” Lutheran Bible Camp.

For more information on the camp, please call 814-483-0296 or 412-817-3988 or visit <http://www.midnemdnalc.org/youth.html>.

Daily devotions? Why bother?

Jesus said to the Jews who had believed in him, "If you abide in my word, you are truly my disciples, and you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free." — John 8:31

Although this newsletter will reach you after we have entered into the season of Lent, it is worth taking a few moments to reflect on the NALC brief devotions which appear daily on the NALC website and are linked to many congregational websites.

It also gives me the opportunity to introduce the Lenten devotional booklet I write, titled, "From Ashes to Easter," now available on the website as well as in a variety of formats. To do so, I would address the simple question, "Why bother?"

I once began a Sunday evening congregational meeting with a devotion not unlike those I write for Advent and Lent. It began with a brief Scripture reading, included a few thoughts of illumination and explanation and ended with a prayer. After the meeting, a member came up to me and said, "Why bother with another devotion? We've already been to worship this morning!" This member soon left our congregation, apparently deciding there was just too much Scripture and prayer.

Thankfully, I've only met one Lutheran with such an attitude in my 35 years of ministry. It is true that we receive a rich wellspring of Scripture by attending Sunday worship each week. Our three-year Sunday lectionary provides us with the reading of almost the entire Bible. To be faithfully present each and every Sunday means that we engage in a significant amount of Bible "study" through the reading of the lessons and Gospel and a Biblically-based sermon. Sunday worship, however, ought never take the place of daily Scripture reading and prayer!

Reading the Bible — meditating on the Word of God and Jesus' word — is at the heart of discipleship. It is no coincidence that our focus on discipleship in the NALC involves a serious, in-depth commitment to being in the Word! Our Lord, Himself, says in John 8: *"If you abide in my word, you are truly my disciples, and you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free."*



Ministry Matters

Pastor David Wendel

Assistant to the Bishop
for Ministry and Ecumenism

Abiding in His word and the Word of God means "living" in it — dwelling in it, making our home in it — day by day and moment by moment. This is the essence of discipleship — being in the Word of God. People will know we are disciples of Jesus when they see that we are in the Word. The Word proclaims the good news of Jesus' death and resurrection. Hearing the Word helps us to know the truth — the truth which will set us free!

There is no discipleship apart from the Word. The Word instructs, inspires and sustains disciples. No wonder Jesus says, in the Great Commission, "Make disciples ... teaching them to observe all that I have commanded" (Matthew 28:19-20).

Our Lutheran reality in North America is that the Word of God has been largely "sidelined" in the last generation or two. We were told that the Bible only "contains" the Word — which leads one to wonder which part of the Bible is God's Word and which isn't. Others have claimed that Scripture has been translated and re-translated so often, you can't really know what the original meaning was. Still others have pushed the opinion that all of truth is subjective, so what is true in the Bible for you may not be true for me.

That, together with the assumption that the Bible is often difficult to understand, has sown much doubt about the truth and trustworthiness of Scripture. Many have concluded, "Why bother?"

Sadly, many Lutherans today are biblically illiterate, rarely reading Scripture or attending to the Word. And with less than 30 percent of Lutherans in

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church each week, we're not getting the Word in worship either!

This is why we "bother" with brief, succinct daily devotions. The goal is simple and straightforward. For those who are already in the Word each day, Lenten devotions provide Scripture and meditation focused on the themes of this season of reflection, repentance and renewal. For those who have not developed the "holy habit" of "abiding" in God's Word, a brief daily verse from Scripture, together with reflection and prayer, can establish a pattern that may continue long after Easter Sunday.

If you only avail yourself of daily devotions during Advent or Lent, thanks be to God that you have been blessed in such a way. If this habit carries over to the remainder of the year, even better! The NALC devotions are provided by different NALC folks for every day of the year.

Let us be clear: the NALC affirms that the Bible is the Word of God! The Bible is trustworthy and true and will never fail you or lead you astray. The Bible is clear and easily understood by the average believer. We are called — not to "dabble" in the Word of God — but to abide in it as disciples and followers of Jesus. We invite you to live with Scripture during the season of Lent and beyond, using the NALC devotions. And we encourage you to go more deeply into the Word of God, day by day and week by week.

The Lenten devotional is available for download from the NALC website in two printable formats: a large-print and a booklet version.

The devotional is available in the NALC Walk of Faith app for Apple or Android devices. The free NALC Walk of Faith app is available from the Apple App Store or from Google Play.

The daily devotion will also be featured on the NALC website and on Facebook and Twitter. The devotions are easily shared with family and friends via Facebook and Twitter.

FROM ASHES TO EASTER



A Lenten Devotional
Based on Year I
of the
Lutheran Book of Worship
Daily Lectionary

by The Rev. Dr. David M. Wendel

To receive daily devotionals via SMS, please text @NALCLEN to 614-682-8693. To receive daily devotionals via email, please visit: <https://www.remind.com/join/nalcclent>.

I will also be reading the devotions and producing videos of them. The video format of the devotions will be available on Facebook (in the NALC group) and on the NALC's Vimeo site: <https://vimeo.com/thenalc>.

Daily devotions by NALC pastors are available on the NALC website, on the NALC Network, and on Facebook and Twitter each day of the year. The devotions are also available on many congregation's websites.

The devotions by Pastor Wendel will be featured during Lent and are the same as those in the printed booklets and on the NALC Walk of Faith app. The daily devotions are based on the daily lectionary from the Lutheran Book of Worship.



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

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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.

NALC News

Published 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

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