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California pastor elected bishop of the North American Lutheran Church

Indianapolis, IN: Following a year of discernment after Bishop John Bradosky's retirement announcement at the North American Lutheran Church (NALC) annual Convocation last August, the Rev. Dr. Dan Selbo, 63, was elected this week by a majority of delegates at the 2019 NALC Convocation to serve as its next bishop. Selbo is currently serving as the pastor of St. Timothy's Lutheran Church in San Jose, CA and was the former dean of the Central Pacific Mission District.

Before the annual Convocation, congregations proposed eligible pastors to a nominating committee, who then published answers from each nominee pertaining to various questions related to their ministry and hopes for the future. This week, 299 pastors, 308 lay-delegates, and 187 visitors from mission districts across North America met in Indianapolis, IN for prayer and discernment before voting to elect Selbo.

A slate of twelve nominees who were willing to stand for election to be the next bishop of the NALC were announced on May 10, 2019. An additional two nominees were nominated on the floor during Convocation. "The Executive Council and the Nominating Committee are grateful for the prayerful manner and approach our church took to bring us to the election of our next bishop," said the Rev. Mark Chavez, NALC General Secretary. "So many people were praying. We wished for prayer, not politics. Thank you to everyone who helped in that effort."

The nominees included the Rev. Dr. Catherine Braasch STS, (intentional interim pastor of Grace Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jackson Center, OH); the Rev. B. A. "Tim" Christ STS, pastor of Joy Lutheran Church (Richmond, TX); the Rev. Phillip Gagnon STS, pastor of St. Albert Evangelical Lutheran Church (St. Albert, AB); the Rev. Dr. Jeffray S. Greene, pastor of Word of God Lutheran Church (Peachtree City, GA); the Rev. Marshall E. Hahn, pastor of Marion Lutheran Church and Norway Lutheran Church (St. Olaf, IA); the Rev. Ronald Hoyum, pastor of Port Madison Lutheran Church (Bainbridge Island, WA); the Rev. Melinda H. Jones, pastor of Advent Evangelical Lutheran Church (North Charleston, SC); the Rev. Kenneth C. Kimball STS, pastor of Old East Paint Creek Lutheran Church (Waterville, IA) and Old West Paint Creek Lutheran Church (Waukon, IA); the Rev. James T. Lehmann STS, pastor of Immanuel Lutheran Church (Thomasboro, IL); the Rev. Dr. Eric M. Riesen, pastor of Trinity Lutheran Church (Ashland, OH); the Rev. Dan Selbo, pastor of St. Timothy's Lutheran Church (San Jose, CA); and the Rev. Dr. David M. Wendel, assistant to the NALC bishop for ministry and ecumenism (Jacksonville, FL). The Rev. Dr. Amy C. Schifrin STS,

president of the North American Lutheran Seminary (Ambridge, PA), and the Rev. Dr. Amy C. Little, pastor of Trinity Lutheran Church (Monroeville, OH), were nominated from the floor of the Convocation as the thirteenth and fourteenth candidates for bishop.

These fourteen nominees were asked to prepare and submit written materials for clergy- and lay-delegates' consideration. The materials included their basic biographical information and responses to a comprehensive questionnaire.

Following several earlier events in the week, including the prestigious Braaten-Benne Lectures in Theology and the NALC Mission Festival, the Convocation began with morning devotions by the Rev. Dr. Malcolm Guite, English poet, singer-songwriter, Anglican priest, and academic. Electronic voting machines were distributed individually to certified delegates and clergy at registration. Following introductions, reports and greetings, the first ballot began following lunch, narrowing the election to the final four candidates: pastors Riesen, Schifrin, Selbo and Wendel. Following opening statements from these remaining nominees, all clergy- and lay-delegates were strongly encouraged to attend a time of informal conversation with each of the nominees. Following morning devotions on Friday, voting continued. In the fourth ballot, an election was reached as Selbo was named the bishop-elect. An installation service followed the election.

"Dan Selbo is the leader our pastors and lay-delegates have chosen to be the third bishop of the North American Lutheran Church. God willing, he will begin his service in the tenth year of our corporate life," said Bishop John Bradosky. "I will do all I can as his predecessor to support him in the catalytic ministry to which he has been called, one of spiritual oversight, as defender of the faith, pastor and teacher to the pastors and congregations of the NALC, the chief evangelist, and one dedicated to the disciple-making mission of the Church."

In his address to the Convocation, Selbo expressed his deep appreciation to the North American Lutheran Church. "Thank you for who you are, for being the Body of Christ," said Selbo. "I am honored to be part of the North American Lutheran Church. It is a powerful voice that is so needed in this world today and we are on track, we are being led by the Spirit, we are following Jesus Christ, and we have a message this world is dying to hear and we need to share it. Thank you for your vote of confidence. I ask for your continued prayers in the four years ahead."

Several leaders participated in the laying on of hands during the installation, including Bradosky, as well as the Rev. Yonas Yigezu, president of the Ethiopian Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus; the Rt. Rev. Dr. Alex Mkumbo, bishop of the Central Diocese (Evangelical Lutheran Church in Tanzania); and the Rev. Paull Spring, bishop emeritus of the North American Lutheran Church and bishop emeritus of the Northwestern Pennsylvania Synod (Evangelical Lutheran Church in America).

Also present during the Convocation were a number of ecumenical representatives, including the Most Rev. Dr. Ray R. Sutton, presiding bishop of the Reformed Episcopal Church and bishop of the Diocese of Mid-America (Anglican Church in North America); the Rev. Dr. Joel Lehenbauer, executive director of the LCMS Commission on Theology and Church Relations (Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod); Carmen LaBerge, executive director of the Common Ground Christian Network; the Rev. Martin Fromm, representing both the Global Confessional and Missional Lutheran Forum and the Church Coalition for the Bible and Confession in Bavaria; the Rev. Andreas Späth, vice president of the Internationale Konferenz Bekennender

Gemeinschaften/International Christian Network; and the Rev. James Erich Rutten, chair of the Commission on Ecumenism and Interreligious Affairs (U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops).

Bishop Bradosky will stay on until October 1, at which point Selbo will assume his new responsibilities. "The entire church would like to honor Bishop Bradosky, and we look forward to celebrating his ministry among us," said Chavez. "God provided the leadership that we needed in the person of John Bradosky, and we have already witnessed an unprecedented outpouring of gratitude and thanksgiving in the past several months. We look forward to celebrating his ministry among us for many years."

The NALC is a growing Christian church in the Lutheran tradition, uniting more than 142,500 Lutherans from 433 congregations across the United States and Canada. The NALC embodies the theological center of Lutheranism in North America and stands firmly within the global Lutheran mainstream. The NALC is a church family committed to the authority of the Bible as the inspired Word of God, and, in keeping with the Lutheran Confessions, believes all doctrines should and must be judged by the teaching of Scripture.

The NALC has embraced four Core Values which shape its common life: Christ Centered, Mission Driven, Traditionally Grounded, and Congregationally Focused. As a church centered on the unique Gospel of Jesus Christ, the NALC is animated by missions and evangelism, grounded in the 2,000-year tradition of Christian faith, and organized chiefly to serve our congregations. A renewed Lutheran community moving forward in faith, the NALC is focused on living out Christ's Great Commission to go and make disciples in North America and around the globe.

More details found at thenalc.org/bishop2019

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