



Rev. Amy C. Little, D.Min.
Monroeville, Ohio

Current Call: Trinity Lutheran Church, Monroeville, Ohio NALC
& Sola Publishing

Congregational Membership: Same as above

Basic Biographical Information:

I've been married to Jeff Little for 25 years. We have two children, Noah (22) and Anna (17).

Education:

BS in Zoology, minor in Art from Ohio University, 1990.

M.Div. from Trinity Lutheran Seminary, Columbus, Ohio 2002

D.Min from Lutheran Theological Seminary at Philadelphia, 2012 (focus on Bowen Family Systems Theory and Luther's catechisms) Thesis title, "Called, Gathered, Enlightened and Sanctified: Using Bowen Theory and Luther's Catechisms to Resolve Conflict and Revitalize Congregations"

Hobbies and Interests:

Coaching (swimming, and track and field, especially high jump)

Bicycling, walking, and exercising

Quilting

Creating Art

Cooking

Describe how you experience God active in your daily life:

God is always present with me. I can feel his love through my family, friends, and co-workers in the kingdom. His love flows through me in ways that amaze me at times, for example just talking to people and being in the community. My prayer life is one of "praying without ceasing," and so all through the day I am aware of God's presence and I often whisper back to him, "Kyrie Eleison." I love to read theology and I feel God's nudging in my life through my study. I hear him calling me to love my neighbor and to encourage the folks in my congregation to live out the call that Jesus has put on their lives. I experience God's activity when I'm with the children and youth of my congregation and village. They are a huge part of what God has called me to do and be in this world and for some reason they seem to be drawn to me as well. I feel God's presence and activity in my work with Sola Publishing which is a great joy for me. As I have the privilege of editing other's work, their words minister to me and help me grow in faith and in spirit. In worship I feel God's love for me and for the congregation I serve. He called us together nearly 17 years ago and has been using us for his purposes in mighty, joyful ways ever since. On the candidacy committee of the NALC I have prayed for and with candidates who are discerning a call to ministry. I spent a great deal of time rewriting the discernment documents for those who are feeling a call to ministry. I regularly ask God where he is calling me and to whom he is calling me to serve. In a word, God's presence is ubiquitous - it never ends and it surrounds me with comfort, love, joy, peace, and a drive to share his love with the world.

List a favorite Scripture verse and tell why it has meaning to you:

There are so many that are precious to me and that list grows longer every year. The story that describes my faith journey would probably be John 4 - the woman at the well. Growing up I felt like no one really saw me. At 6'1" I'm hard to miss, but it seemed that those who were meant to be the most important figures in a young woman's life, looked right through me. When I discovered the ways in which Jesus sees me, by virtue of this story, it changed my life.

Along with John 4, there is one set of verses that continues to sustain me: 1 Thessalonians 5:16 - 19, "Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you. Do not quench the Spirit." I have learned, with much spiritual wrestling, to listen (or at least be open) to the Holy Spirit. I have learned to trust that Christ is in control and even the things that I would rather avoid, those unwanted gifts, are opportunities for Jesus to speak to me, shape me, and love me without measure.

In your ministry and life experience, what has prepared you to fulfill the role of bishop of the NALC?

If I'm honest, I would have to say nothing. There is nothing about my life experience that could prepare me for a role such as this. It is not something I aspire to and it is not something that I covet. The only reason you are reading this now is because a few trusted colleagues have continually urged me to write this. I am once again listening for the Holy Spirit. I am happy with my current ministry setting (Trinity Lutheran and Sola Publishing) but if God should desire me to serve in another capacity in Christ's church I will not fight his will. I've tried that before and it doesn't work. I do have a great love for Christ's church and am especially interested in faith formation/discipleship, missions (I've been to Malawi three times, India once, and Nepal once), and I have gifts for writing and editing that may serve to be helpful.

What spiritual gifts and skills has God given you to bless this ministry?

Instead of trying to predict how the spiritual gifts God has given me would bless any particular ministry, I would rather just reflect on the gifts themselves. It will be up to the Lord of all to use what he has given me for his purposes, whatever those may be.

I always tell people when this questions arises that it's not bragging if someone asks you what you're good at or what your gifts are. It's still hard to put them into words because it still feels like some sort of boasting to me - however, I will try in all humility to flesh that out.

I am a very creative person. I have more ideas in my head than I know what to do with. I see ways to solve problems and am fairly adept at bringing others along with me to get things done. I use my creativity to try and inspire the faith of others, through media, art, lesson plans, Mystery Trips, skits, preaching, and in print.

I am comfortable with people of all ages and people seem to warm up to me fairly quickly. I try very hard to listen intently when others are speaking and to honor what they are saying.

I'm very good at names. I try very hard to learn names because I think it is incredibly important. My husband says I'm a good preacher (take that for what it's worth, spousal bias and all).

I'm not afraid to get my hands dirty and work right alongside the people God has called me to shepherd. This means I do yard work at church, run the vacuum, dry the dishes, cook, paint and whatever else we are working on. I do this because I believe that relationships are one of the most important aspects of ministry. Plus, it's in those moments that amazing conversations about faith happen!

I do not like conflict but I must be fairly good at dealing with it. With the help of the Holy Spirit I worked very hard for the first 8 years of my call to Trinity, Monroeville to bring about a culture of accountability, conflict resolution and spiritual health. That's why I studied Bowen Family

Systems theory for so long! I have many colleagues who call me to help them sort out conflicts in their parishes. I guess I can see things from a bird's eye view and they find that helpful. I consider it an honor that they would trust me with their stories.

So, those are some things about me that describe who I am and what gifts God has given me. If I had to describe myself I'd tell you that I believe in generosity, I am fiercely loyal to those I love, I am honest especially when it comes to speaking the truth in love, I'm a hugger, I desire to make a positive impact on the lives of young people because they are growing up in a confusing world, and last but not least, if I cook for you that means I really adore you. Feeding people is my love language.

Describe how the Core Values of the NALC would guide your ministry as bishop, and how those values can become more and more prominent in the life of the NALC and its congregations.

Christ Centered

There's a reason that the core value of "Christ Centered" comes first in the list. If we are not Christ centered then we are on the wrong track. All that we do has to be focused on Christ for he is the reason we exist as a church. Teaching and leading folks who are followers of Jesus is our first priority. We have been called to share the Good News of Christ with the world, but if we are not centered in and on Christ, then we will not be able to live into the Great Commission. I would make sure that our gatherings as the larger church were focused on Christ and that all of our congregations understood and evaluated their focus as well. If training is needed, we could see to helping folks gain a clearer understanding of what it means to be Christ Centered in the first place, rather than building centered, program centered, or the like.

Mission Driven

Knowing what our mission is, to me, is the first step toward being mission driven. It seems that many congregations I've known have no clear idea why they exist or what their purpose is. When we don't understand our mission, that our whole lives are to be spent sharing Christ with the world, then our faith is rather stagnant. When we have a purpose and we know our mission, faith comes alive and we are able to live it out in our daily vocation, at work and at home, but also alongside our brothers and sisters in our faith community. With that in mind, I would work hard to help folks understand what our mission is and how we can live into God's call on our lives in ever more powerful ways.

Traditionally Grounded

It is important that we are grounded in the ancient traditions of the church, tracing our lineage back to the apostles and early church. It's too easy in our current culture to cower to the progressive tendencies present in our society. We will and do take heat for standing on the Word of God, but we know we are in good company with those who came before us, who fought the heresies that continue to appear in the church today. We have to know the past and understand the history of the Christian Church in order to be grounded in God's Word and orthodox, confessional theology. I would work diligently to teach and instill the traditional values that the NALC was founded upon. I believe knowing what we believe and living that out attracts people to our congregations because they sense our confidence in Christ and the health that exists within the faith community.

Congregationally Focused

The congregation is where the Gospel is lived out, day after day. It is in our neighborhoods that

we see folks who are in need, struggling to make ends meet, or to live through the chaos of broken relationships, raise kids in single parent homes, etc. While we need executives who organize and train pastors and leaders, they cannot do the work that the local parish does. I tell the people in my congregation quite frequently, "You see more people in a day than I do. I am here to serve and equip you, but you go out into the world even further than I do, and you take Christ with you." I would encourage congregations to continue to develop their mission and ministry so that it is truly serving the people in their neighborhood and the world.

What tangible actions can the NALC, its mission districts and its member congregations take to live out our commitment to be a Christ-Centered and Mission-Driven church?

I believe we are on the right track with our discipleship initiatives. It would be wonderful to see Mission Districts hosting educational retreats, youth retreats, and other discipleship opportunities to train more and more of our parishioners to be sent into the world to live out Jesus' love and mercy. I think many people don't know how and think that it is something difficult when it's really not. We need to continue to encourage every congregation and every disciple to share their gifts with the world and to proclaim God's mercy everywhere they go.

What is your understanding of discipleship as a strategic direction for the NALC?

What hopes do you have for the mission of the NALC?

The NALC has worked very diligently to empower and equip all of its congregations to be disciple making gatherings. I would continue along this path by continuing to provide coaches for pastors, leaders, and parishioners in their life with Christ.