2020 VISION

THE NORTH AMERICAN LUTHERAN CHURCH
A 10-POINT STRATEGIC PLAN (2020-2023)

OVERVIEW

The following represents a 2020 Vision for the North American Lutheran Church (NALC). The development of this vision included input from NALC staff, Executive Council, mission district deans, the North American Lutheran Seminary (NALS) president and Board of Regents. The vision has been endorsed by the Executive Council, was shared with the Ministerium in February 2020 and presented at the NALC Mission Convocation in August 2020.

The 2020 Mission Convocation endorsed the direction this vision sets for the NALC for the following three years. The convocation committed to fervent daily prayer and action for the 2020 Vision to come to life in and among us; to encourage collaboration of all disciples, congregations and entities of the NALC in implementing the vision; and finally, to call for annual reports and frequent updates on the progress of the 2020 Vision.

For each vision point, a goal has been set. Under that goal are possibilities of what may be done to reach that goal. This document will be reviewed annually by a strategic planning team. Therefore, this is a working document and will continue to change as we move forward together.

CORE VALUES

The 10-point plan supports the four NALC Core Values and represents the commitments we are striving to accomplish in this vision.

Christ Centered
We confess the apostolic faith in Jesus Christ according to the Holy Scriptures. We affirm the authority of the Scriptures as the authoritative source and norm, "according to which all doctrines should and must be judged" (Formula of Concord). We accept the ecumenical creeds and the Lutheran Confessions as true witnesses to the Word of God.

Mission Driven
We believe that the mission of the Church is to preach the Gospel and to make disciples for Christ. We believe that making disciples — in our congregations, in our communities and nations, and around the world — must be a priority of the Church in the present age.

Traditionally Grounded
We affirm the ecumenical creeds and the faithful witness of the Church across time and space. We endorse the form and practices of the universal Church that are consistent with Scripture, particularly the office of the ministry and the tradition of worship under Word and Sacrament. We seek dialogue and fellowship with other Lutheran churches and with faithful Christians of other confessions.

Congregationally Focused
We strive to be a church that is organized to facilitate the ministries of local congregations in a posture of servanthood and a spirit of partnership, through the provision of resources, connections and information.

10-POINT VISION

In the North American Lutheran Church, by the year 2023, we see...

Disciple-Making Cultures

A church body committed to developing disciple-making congregations and cultures

Congregational Multiplication

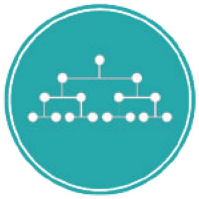
A body of believers committed to increasing our mission outreach and congregational multiplication efforts

Pastoral Support

A denomination in which every congregation receives regular and consistent pastoral support

Continuing Education

A continuing education emphasis that supports the ongoing development of all NALC pastors and lay leaders



Continental Restructuring

A strategy for continental restructuring able to expand with denominational growth

Seminary System

A denomination with the strongest and most highly respected Lutheran seminary training system in North America

Technology & Communication

A communications strategy focused on forming identity, unity and testimony across our church body

Ecumenical Relationships

A denomination in which our international and ecumenical relationships strengthen our shared commitment to the Great Commission, the Great Commandments and the Church catholic, and which enhance our partnership on the congregational level

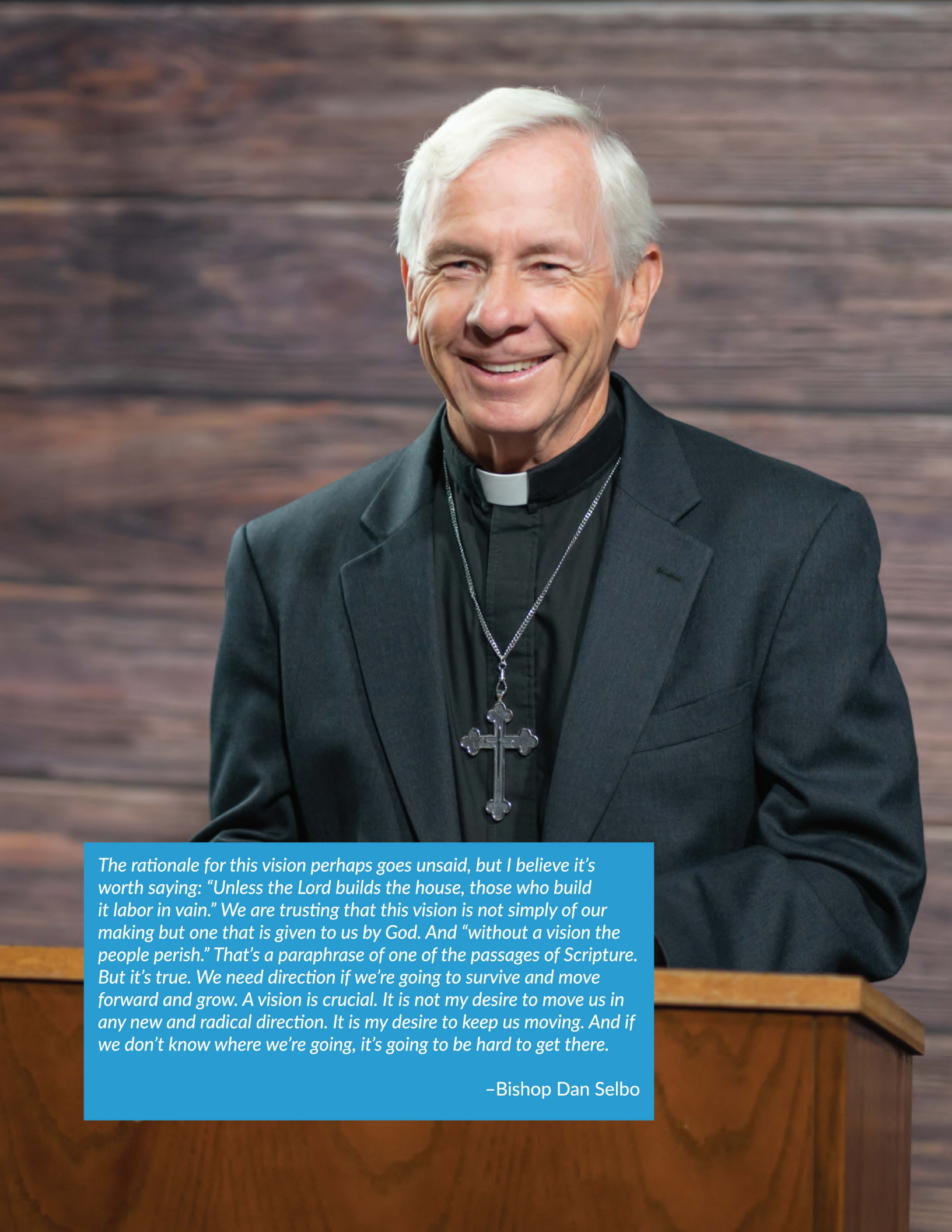
Financial Strength

A church body with the financial strength to support its God-given vision

Strategic Planning

A Strategic Planning Team (SPT) that continually prays for and works to develop the next steps for our God-given vision and future

Last Updated on September 18, 2020



The rationale for this vision perhaps goes unsaid, but I believe it's worth saying: "Unless the Lord builds the house, those who build it labor in vain." We are trusting that this vision is not simply of our making but one that is given to us by God. And "without a vision the people perish." That's a paraphrase of one of the passages of Scripture. But it's true. We need direction if we're going to survive and move forward and grow. A vision is crucial. It is not my desire to move us in any new and radical direction. It is my desire to keep us moving. And if we don't know where we're going, it's going to be hard to get there.

–Bishop Dan Selbo

1. DISCIPLE-MAKING CULTURES

A church body committed to developing disciple-making congregations and cultures

GOAL

More than 200 congregations intentionally developing disciple-making cultures by 2023

The goal is to produce disciples who are, themselves, able to disciple others. The disciples will be active in leading people to faith in Jesus, until *they* are able to lead others to faith in Jesus. Discipleship includes (*is*) following Jesus and helping others follow Jesus.

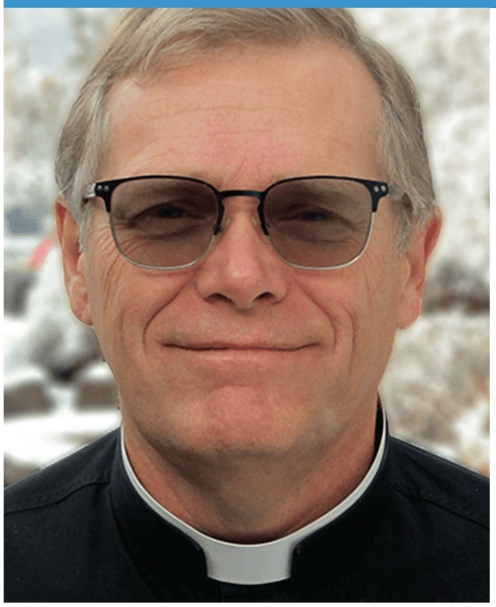
We will use the CREDO (Confessional Renewal Engaging Discipleship & Outreach) Initiative as the framework. This is not a one-size-fits-all approach, but a framework for developing disciple-making cultures.

We are planning for the expansion of trained guides for congregational support and will hold annual guide leadership training beginning in winter 2021.

Disciple-making will be incorporated into training for seminarians, interns and first-call pastors effective fall 2021.

We will also provide disciple-making models and resources for training youth and families/parents. We will work with Gary and Laurie Pecuch and the Life-to-Life Discipleship Team to support this emphasis.

COMPONENT LEAD



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Supported by:
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Last Updated on September 18, 2020

2. CONGREGATIONAL MULTIPLICATION

A body of believers committed to increasing our mission outreach and congregational multiplication efforts

GOAL

Engagement of every NALC congregation in active and proactive outreach efforts by 2022

Every congregation is challenged to be in relationship with at least one local, global and domestic mission effort.

We will have 45 new mission starts by 2022, and this is included in challenges to deans for each mission district. Congregations are encouraged to consider a new mission start in their area.

We are planning a provision of resources for mission district deans and/or congregations to assist them in achieving this goal.

We will raise awareness, train and intentionally equip our congregations for international mission. This includes: (1) assisting our pastors and congregations in their aspiration of global outreach, learning and relationship building, (2) working with ministry partners to raise up global workers and partner with those already in the field, (3) working through our relationships and partners — assisting and providing teaching and preaching ministries in international settings, and (4) facilitating a relationship with the NALC, NALS and Leadstar to train 25,000 leaders for the sake of the Gospel in the next 10 years.

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Last Updated on September 18, 2020

3. PASTORAL SUPPORT

A denomination in which every congregation receives regular and consistent pastoral support

GOAL

Pastoral support for every congregation by the end of 2021

The goal includes having active ordained pastors serving in multiple parishes, as well as retired pastors serving in part-time and shorter-term roles.

We will investigate and encourage partnerships with Lutheran Congregations in Mission for Christ (LCMC) and Anglican Church in North America (ACNA) congregations when possible.

We will request a theological framework from the Commission on Theology & Doctrine by spring 2021 that allows us to: (1) provide models for alternative worship and training of lay leaders (identified by congregations) to serve in Word and Sacrament ministry, (2) consider a diaconal ministry and/or licensed lay ministry to support this vision component, and (3) train for both preaching and administering of the Sacraments as equally important.

We will explore options to provide additional employment for pastors serving in new starts and/or tent-making ministries.

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Last Updated on September 18, 2020

4. CONTINUING EDUCATION

A continuing education emphasis that supports the ongoing development of all NALC pastors and lay leaders

GOAL

Expansion, coordination and promotion of NALC continuing education opportunities, beginning in 2021

We will encourage every pastor to take part in at least one continuing education opportunity per year.

We will offer learning opportunities in various disciplines (preaching, discipleship, stewardship, church-planting, etc.), including continued education for first-call pastors and experienced pastors, along with a long-term strategy for ongoing development.

We will coordinate efforts to broadcast courses and training seminars throughout the NALC, and consider using the annual Pastors' Conference and Lutheran Week as venues for continuing education offerings.

We will consider offerings to encourage pastoral self-care, including emotional, spiritual and physical well-being, along with resources for maintaining a healthy family-life.

We will include encouragement for salary, vacation, continuing education and sabbatical funding in the call process/pastoral call guidelines.

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Last Updated on September 18, 2020

5. CONTINENTAL RESTRUCTURING

A strategy for continental restructuring able to expand with denominational growth

GOAL

Review recommended restructuring strategy and commit to a comprehensive restructuring effort by no later than the 2021 Convocation

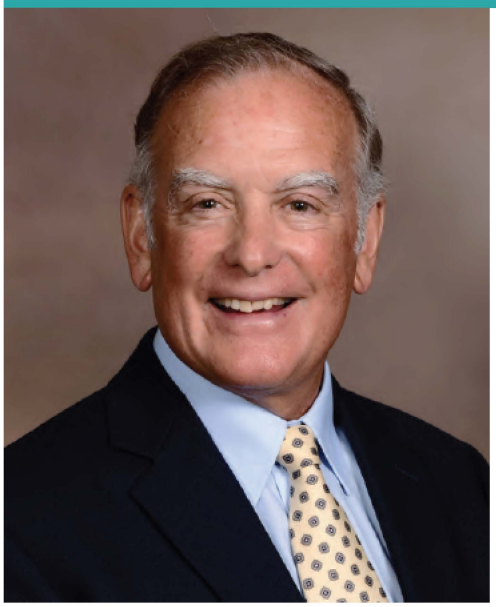
Before committing to the addition of regional staff and/or bishops, we will consider an expanded, limited and authorized use of mission district deans for similar purposes.

Our restructuring approach will include clear responsibilities and limitations, and authority will be well-defined and well-communicated.

Consideration will be given to larger geographic regions, including multiple mission districts, in which one of the deans, selected by the bishop, in consultation with the regional pastors and deans, would serve in a more expanded role as a direct extension of the bishop's office.

If restructuring includes additional regional staff and/or a dean-at-large for a region, the title for the position(s) will be consistent with the actual responsibilities assigned. Nominees for each region will be offered by the mission districts in those regions. Final selection of additional staffing support, if needed, will be determined by the NALC bishop and Executive Council and/or by the regions. We will begin with part-time responsibilities and, as appropriate, limited compensation, expanding the structure as needed. One size may not fit every mission district and/or region.

COMPONENT LEAD



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Supported by:
The NALC Staff, the Executive Council Sub-Team and Mission District Deans

Last Updated on September 18, 2020

6. SEMINARY SYSTEM

A denomination with the strongest and most highly respected Lutheran seminary training system in North America

GOAL

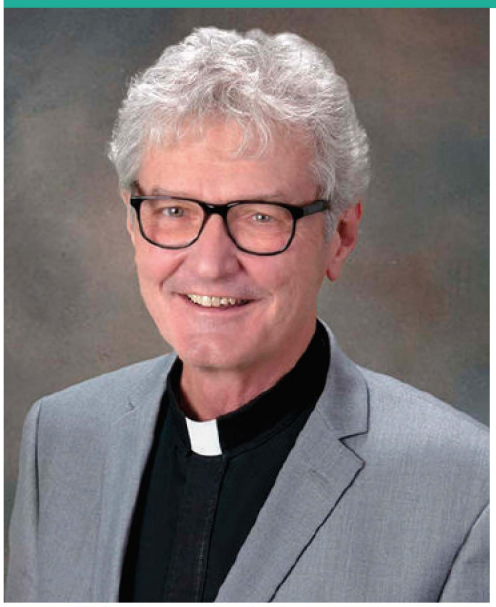
Upgrade the structure, program and recruitment of our seminary over the next three years

Structure: We will solidify the center in Ambridge, Pennsylvania, with learning hubs/extension centers in other locations, and clarify the relationship between, and the authority and responsibilities of, the Candidacy Committee, Board of Regents, seminary president, Executive Council and NALS. The NALS "banner" will represent all NALC-approved pastoral training options. We will build relationships with other confessional Lutheran seminaries and undergraduate institutions, exploring ways to cooperate in theological education. We will also join with our ecumenical partners to foster orthodox theological education. We will work with visiting faculty to expand both residential- and distance-learning opportunities. Internship sites will be identified in each mission district.

Program: A disciple-making emphasis will be incorporated into seminary training and first-call support, with consideration given to an outcome-based approach to seminary training. We will increase distance-learning options while maintaining confessional, orthodox teaching. We will incorporate theological education with pastoral training in congregations, and work with undergraduate institutions to develop bachelor's degrees in which seminary level courses are offered and qualify for seminary requirements, also considering ministry experience in lieu of internship requirement.

Recruitment: We will add NALS staff for the recruitment of new seminarians by 2021. We will increase scholarship support for all NALC candidacy-approved seminary students and challenge each mission district/congregation to raise up/plant seeds for potential seminary candidates (students, young adults, second career). We will work with NEXUS to encourage students to consider a pastoral ministry vocation. Overall, we will work to double the number of seminary students by 2023, prepare 300 pastors for the ordained ministry in the next 10 years, and provide funding to train seminary professors to serve at the NALS.

COMPONENT LEAD



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Supported by:
The NALS Board of Regents,
the NALC Executive Council and
the Rev. Dr. Daniel W. Selbo.

Last Updated on September 18, 2020

7. TECHNOLOGY & COMMUNICATION

A communications strategy focused on forming identity, unity and testimony across our church body

GOAL

Identify, train and resource communication specialists in every mission district, ministry, committee and vision component of the NALC by August 2023

Identity: We see a continued emphasis on developing and communicating our unique identity and values as a confessional Lutheran church in 21st century North America. To that end, we will create an identity document and brand guidelines to encourage consistent messaging about the NALC and its Core Values by January 2021.

Unity: We see an increased level of unity and affinity between our ministries, mission districts, congregations and parishioners across the continent. To that end, we will build a communications hub to ensure unity and streamlined communications processes by August 2021.

Testimony: We see an increased flow of the testimony and proclamation of God at work and congregations engaging in mission in their communities. To that end, we will use current best practices to upgrade our primary communications streams (NALC News, website, emails, social media), making them more expansive and participative across the continent by August 2022.

COMPONENT LEAD

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Supported by:
Madeline Benson and the
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Last Updated on September 18, 2020

8. ECUMENICAL RELATIONSHIPS

A denomination in which our international and ecumenical relationships strengthen our shared commitment to the Great Commission, the Great Commandments and the Church catholic, and which enhance our partnership on the congregational level

GOAL

Review our current international and ecumenical relationships and clarify the goals for each of our partnership commitments by the end of 2021

We will review and evaluate the purpose and goals for each of our international and ecumenical partnerships.

We will identify specific strategies to strengthen our international and ecumenical partnerships as they relate to this vision component.

We will remain committed to international and ecumenical partnerships that lead to jointly committed and Christ-honoring action steps, consistent with this vision component.

We will evaluate and continue to develop our role as a leader in the international and ecumenical community in ways consistent with this vision component.

COMPONENT LEAD

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Supported by:
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Last Updated on September 18, 2020

9. FINANCIAL STRENGTH

A church body with the financial strength to support its God-given vision

GOAL

A balanced budget that fully supports the vision priorities by 2022

We will develop a vision to inspire and expand financial support, reducing and refocusing current spending allocations wherever possible, and challenging all congregations and mission districts to increase their financial support by 1% of their congregational budget per year, for four years.

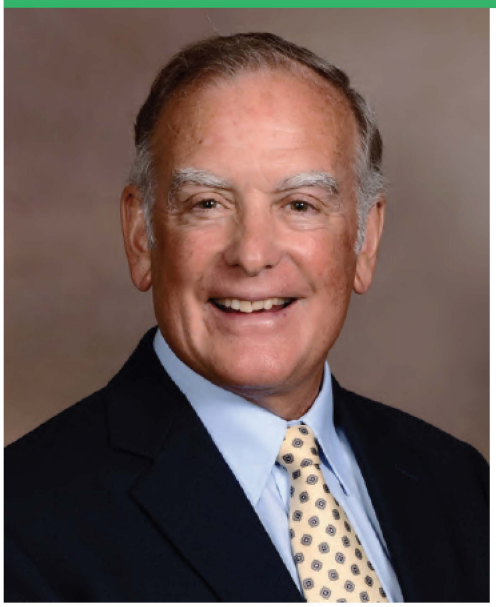
We will offer a direct challenge to larger congregations and individual donors, seeking financial support from outside sources to supplement our resources, and providing and communicating opportunities for end-of-life "Legacy Gifts" to the NALC.

We will establish an emergency fund for pastors in need, and consider the development of a NALC endowment fund as a way of providing on-going and long-term financial support and strength.

We will consider a "Three-Year Vision Appeal" (2021-2023) to provide a solid financial base. The goals and purpose for such an appeal will be clearly defined. Promotion of the appeal will begin in the fall of 2020 and continue throughout the three years. Appeal components will be directly tied to vision components and goals.

Necessary financial reserve levels for all NALC and NALS efforts will be considered and promoted as part of this component. All funding allocations will be directly connected to and supportive of efforts that enhance our collective witness to the Gospel of Jesus Christ and our future in the NALC.

COMPONENT LEAD



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Last Updated on September 18, 2020

10. STRATEGIC PLANNING

A Strategic Planning Team (SPT) that continually prays for and works to develop the next steps for our God-given vision and future

GOAL

Annually review and revise the 2020 Vision to ensure that our denominational priorities remain consistent with our shared calling in Jesus Christ

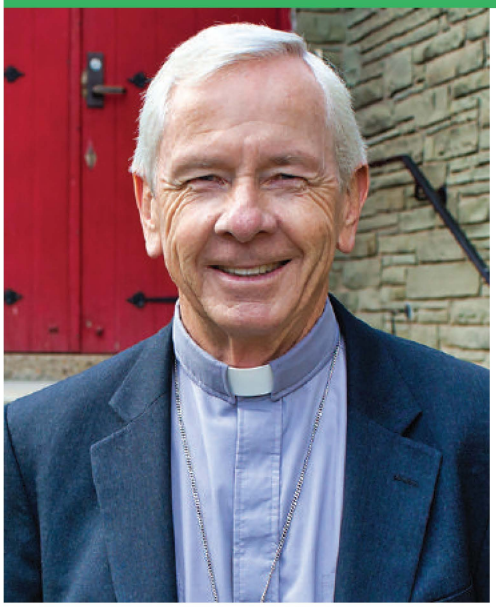
We will recruit seven members to serve on the NALC SPT by November 2020.

We will set specific and measurable goals and timelines for any revisions.

We will seek input from NALC pastors, leaders and leadership teams.

We will work toward a God-sized vision, consistent with our NALC Core Values.

COMPONENT LEAD



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Supported by:
The NALC Staff and the Executive Council Sub-Team

Last Updated on September 18, 2020

Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen.
EPHESIANS 3:20-21 (NIV)

NALC
North American Lutheran Church