

BISHOP SELBO IS REELECTED

The Rev. Dr. Dan Selbo was reelected as bishop of the North American Lutheran Church by delegates to the 2023 NALC Mission Convocation Aug. 9-11 in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma.

More than 600 delegates and visitors gathered at the Omni Oklahoma City Hotel for the convocation around the theme, "Missio Dei: The Work and Mission of God." The convocation and the events preceding it comprise the NALC's biennial Lutheran Week.

Bishop Selbo received 77 percent of the votes for bishop. The Rev. Dr. David Wendel, assistant to the bishop for ministry and ecumenism, was the other nominee for bishop.

"On Fire for Mission" Focus times made the convocation a Mission-Driven gathering. Two-hour blocks of time each day focused on domestic mission, international mission and mission related to congregational life. Dr. David Luy of the North American Lutheran Seminary opened the sessions with a reflection on Scripture. NALC staff members followed with presentations on each day's theme. Delegates then talked about the presentations and discussed ways to "take it home" to their congregations.

Six new NALC global workers were commissioned: Randy Stubbs in Tanzania; the Rev. Sam Chim in Cambodia; the Rev. Dr. Thomas Thorstad in Laos;



Bishop Dan Selbo responds to the announcement that he was reelected as bishop of the North American Lutheran Church by the NALC's 2023 Mission Convocation. His wife Mary looks on.

the Rev. Dr. Slavomír Slávik in Slovakia; the Rev. Aleksandr Gröss in Ukraine; and Dagaga Gamechu in Kenya.

The ministry of the Rev. Dr. Gemechis Buba, assistant to the bishop for international mission, was celebrated. He will now be serving the NALC part time from Ethiopia and will expand his teaching and leadership ministries around the world.

Randy Stubbs, a new NALC global worker in Tanzania, and his daughters delighted delegates

Continued on Page 2

Continued from Page 1

with their music throughout the convocation. His ministry training church musicians and pastors in Tanzania was highlighted at the convocation banquet.

The Rev. Dr. Yonas Yigezu Dibisa, president of the Ethiopian Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus (EECMY), was the preacher for the closing service of Holy Communion. The EECMY, one of the largest Lutheran and fastest-growing Lutheran church bodies in the world, is in a full-communication relationship with the NALC.



More than 600 delegates and visitors attended the 2023 NALC Mission Convocation.

A \$3.8 million budget was approved for the NALC for 2024. The budget anticipates spending nearly \$200,000 of the church's reserve funds.

Delegates voted to redirect about \$10,000 in budgeted support for Lutheran World Relief in the 2024 budget. LWR is one of the NALC's 14 ministry partners. The Executive Council is currently evaluating the church's relationship with its ministry partners and recognized ministries. The relationship between the NALC and LWR is among the those

being evaluated. There has been no change in LWR's current status as a ministry partner.

Congregations are encouraged to support the NALC with at least 5-8 percent of their regular offerings. The NALC constitution requires the Executive Council to announce "an estimate of the percentage of congregational income required to fund the budget."

The 20/20 Vision initiative has received \$2 million in pledges toward its \$5 million goal. \$1 million in cash has already been received.



New NALC global workers commissioned during the convocation were, from left, the Rev. Dr. Gemechis Buba in Ethiopia; Randy Stubbs in Tanzania; the Rev. Dr. Thomas Thorstad in Laos; and the Rev. Dr. Slavomír Slávik in Slovakia.

Other Lutheran Week events included a Faith Formation Festival, the Women of the NALC Gathering, the Lutheran Theologians for the Church Conference, the Global Confessional and Missional Forum, and a gathering of Latino church leaders from across the NALC. A variety of workshops were also offered for delegates.

Documents and videos from the convocation and other events of Lutheran Week are available online at thenalc.org.

MISSION CONVOCATION ELECTS MEMBERS OF EXECUTIVE COUNCIL AND COURT OF ADJUDICATION

The 2023 NALC Mission Convocation elected one lay person and one pastor to the NALC Executive Council and two members of the Court of Adjudication — all to four-year terms.

Julia Hartfelder of Grace Evangelical Lutheran Church in Westerville, Ohio, and the Rev. Dr. Scott Ness, of Prince of Peace Lutheran Church in Fayetteville, Georgia, were elected to the Executive Council.

Julia Hartfelder graduated from the University of Rhode Island with a degree in Plant Science and Horticulture. She is retired. Her work career included serving as a retail buyer and in advertising for Macy's Department Stores and as an administrative assistant in two local school systems. She is married to the Rev. William A. Hartfelder Jr. Pastor Hartfelder is a retired NALC pastor. He is chair of the Lutheran Week planning team.

Julia Hartfelder received 10 votes more than Scott Kramer, a member of St. John's Lutheran Church in Boerne, Texas, and a current member of the Executive Council.

Pastor Ness holds degrees from Wittenberg University and Lutheran Theological Southern Seminary. He has a Doctor of Ministry degree in Semiotics and Future Studies from Portland Seminary. He was ordained in 2005 and has served the NALC in a variety of positions including the Candidacy Committee and as dean of the Mid South Mission District.

Pastor Ness was elected on the fourth ballot from an original slate of five pastors. The other person on the final ballot was the Rev. Dieter Punt, pastor of Holy Trinity Lutheran Church in Troutman, North Carolina.



Julia Hartfelder



Scott Ness



Leslie Haines



Ryan Henkel

The Executive Council functions as the board of directors for the NALC, providing leadership for the church between convocations.

The Rev. Ryan Henkel, pastor of Emmons Lutheran Church in Emmons, Minnesota, and the Rev. Leslie

Continued on Page 4



Continued from Page 3

Haines, executive director of Lutheran Military Veterans and Family Ministries and a member of St. John's Lutheran Church of Lake Township, Fort Wayne, Indiana, were elected to the Court of Adjudication.

The election for the two positions on the Court of Adjudication was decided by one vote. Pastor Henkel received 314 votes; Pastor Haines received 288 votes; and the Rev. Thomas M. Brodbeck, pastor of Grace Lutheran Church in Springfield, Ohio, received 287 votes.

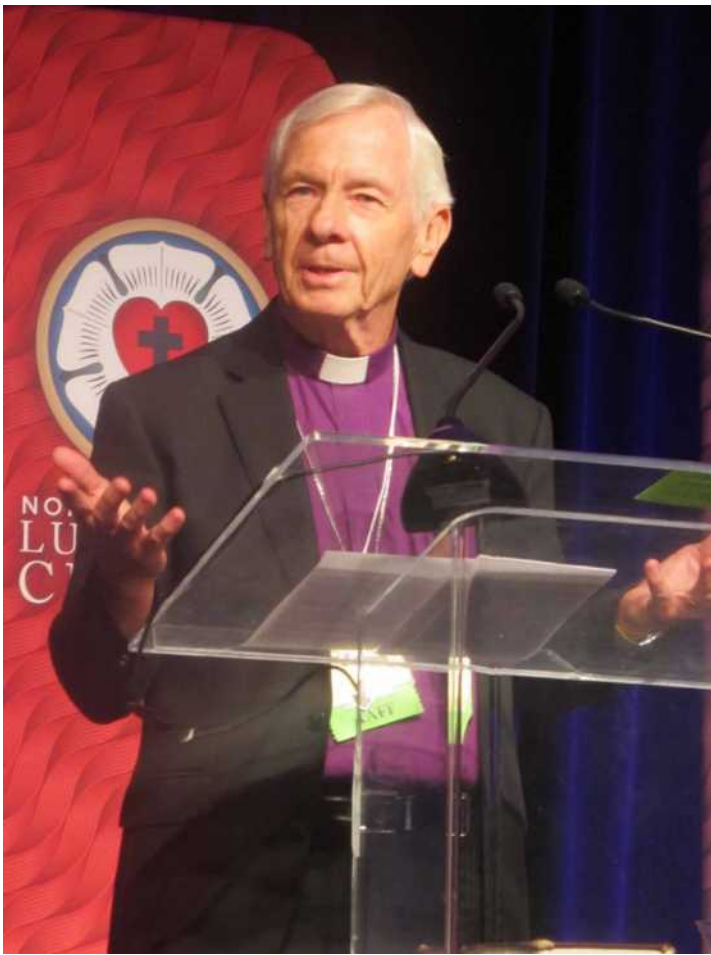
The Court of Adjudication handles questions regarding the interpretation of NALC governing documents and hears accusations that someone has violated those documents and appeals from disciplinary decisions.

The convocation also ratified the election of Steve Mumert of Valhalla Evangelical Lutheran Church in Valhalla Centre, Alberta, to the NALC Canada Section board. The NALC Canada Section facilitates the operation of the NALC in Canada in accordance with Canadian law. Members of the Canada Section board are elected by the Canadian Mission District and ratified by the NALC Mission Convocation.

The convocation also confirmed the appointment of members of the 2024 Nominating Committee by the Executive Council.



The Rev. John Bradosky, NALC bishop emeritus, the Rev. Dr. Yonas Yigezu Dibisa, president of the Ethiopian Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus, and the Rev. Dr. Dan Selbo, NALC bishop, together prior to the closing worship service of the 2023 NALC Mission Convocation.



Bishop Dan Selbo speaking during the bishop election process.



Pastor David Wendel speaking during the bishop election process.

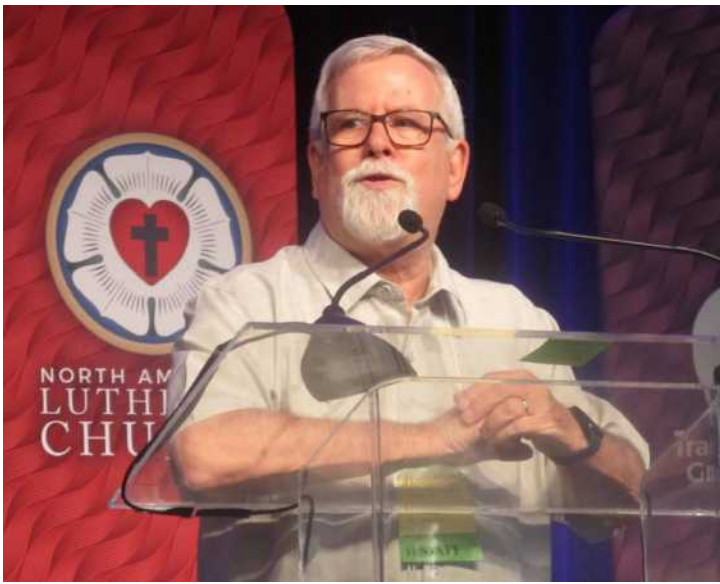
BISHOP ELECTION



Pastor Amy Little, NALC general secretary, presided over the bishop election process.



Deacon Andrew Ames Fuller, NALC director of communications, explained the electronic voting system to the delegates.



Pastor David Keener, director of renewal and discipleship, co-led the domestic mission focus.



Pastor Gemechis Buba, assistant to the bishop for international ministry, co-led the international mission focus.

ON FIRE FOR MISSION SESSIONS



Pastor David Wendel and Pastor Amy Little led the congregation life mission focus.



Pastor Brad Hales, director of church planting and aging ministries, co-led the domestic mission focus.



Pastor Carol Fryer, missions specialist, co-led the international mission focus.



Pastor Challa Gebissa Baro of Ebenezer Oromo Evangelical Church in Minneapolis, Minnesota, spoke during the multi-national mission focus.



Dr. David Luy of the North American Lutheran Seminary delivered a Bible reflection prior to each of the "On Fire for Mission" sessions.



Pastor Juan Portillo of Iglesia Luterana San Miguel in Fort Worth, Texas, spoke during the multi-national mission focus.



The Rev. Dr. Slavomír Slávik, a new NALC global worker, talked about his ministry in Slovakia during the international mission focus.



The Rev. Dr. Yonas Yigezu Dibaba, president of the Ethiopian Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus, was the preacher for the closing service of Holy Communion.



Bishop Dan Selbo presided at the closing service of Holy Communion. Pastor Mac De Waal of Outlook, Saskatchewan, Lutheran Week chaplain, was the assisting minister.

LUTHERAN WEEK WORSHIP



President Yonas Yigezu Dibaba and Bishop John Bradosky prayed for Bishop Dan Selbo during the installation service.



Bishop Dan Selbo preached at the opening worship service.



Randy Stubbs, a new NALC global worker, told the convocation about his ministry teaching music in Tanzania.



Bishop Selbo honored Becky Seifert and Anne Gleason for their years of service to the NALC.

LUTHERAN WEEK BANQUET



Megan Ndale, daughter of Randy Stubbs, led the convocation in dancing to a traditional Tanzanian song.



Becky Seifert



Anne Gleason



Randy Stubbs, a new NALC global worker, and his daughters Marissa Stubbs and Megan Ndale perform at the banquet. They performed and led worship music throughout the convocation.



Pastor Mac De Waal of Bethlehem Lutheran Church in Outlook, Saskatchewan, was the Lutheran Week chaplain. He planned and led worship and prayers throughout the week.



Michael Johnson, NALC treasurer, explained the financial reports and budget.

2023 MISSION CONVOCATION



A variety of ministries had display tables



Bishop Selbo and several presenters discussed the fund-raising appeal for the 20/20 Vision and ways that individuals and congregations can be involved.





The Rev. Dr. Eric Riesen, president of the North American Lutheran Seminary, talked about the ministry of the NALS Network and the increasing numbers of new candidates for ministry in the NALC. Behind him are, from left, the Rev. Dr. Nathan Yoder, Dr. Alex Pierce, the Rev. Jeff Morlock, and Dr. David Luy.



NALC deans gathered for an early morning meeting.



Workshops on a variety of topics were offered for convocation delegates.





Pastor Teresa Peters, director of youth and family ministry, spoke during the congregational life mission focus of the NALC Mission Convocation. She told the delegates about upcoming NALC events for youth and young adults.

FAITH FORMATION FESTIVAL



Wondmagegn Udessa Bidire, Children and Youth Ministry director for the Ethiopian Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus, explained youth ministry in his country.



Melanie Corn, NALC youth and family ministry specialist, talked about the day camp program in the Carolinas Mission Region.



Participants in the Faith Formation Festival training for Youth and Family Ministry



Participants in the Lutheran Theologians for the Church Conference, a gathering of NALC and other Lutheran theologians for formal and informal theological discussion. This gathering, formerly known as “younger theologians,” is held as a part of the NALC’s commitment to raise up a new generation of Lutheran scholars.



Participants in the Global Confessional and Missional Forum, a gathering of Lutheran church leaders from around the world.



Participants in the Women of the NALC Annual Gathering



Women of the NALC Council members, from left, front row: Peggy Jording, Amy Werner, Sandra Liska; back row: Mary Lea Pfenninger, M. Carolyn Rastrelli, Marti Baggs and Pastor Cathy Fanslau.

WOMEN OF THE NALC



Women of the NALC chair Peggy Jording of Christ the King Lutheran Church in Newcastle, Wyoming, addressed the convocation.



Dr. Gilbert Meilaender of Valparaiso University



Dr. Paul Blowers of Emmanuel Christian Seminary



Dr. David Luy of North American Lutheran Seminary

BRAATEN-BENNE LECTURES

The theme for the 2023 Carl E. Braaten and Robert D. Benne Lectures in Theology was “God the Father Creates ... in His Image.” The lecture series is a part of the NALC’s biennial Lutheran Week.

Dr. Robert Benne and Dr. Mickey Mattox appeared at this year’s lectures electronically because of travel issues.

The lectures from the 2021 and 2023 Bratten-Benne Lectures in Theology will be published together in a single book. Those who registered for either year’s lectures will receive a printed copy.

Recordings of the live stream video of the lectures may be watched online at thenalc.org.

BISHOP SELBO'S REPORT TO THE MISSION CONVOCATION

Following is the text of Bishop Dan Selbo's oral report to the 2023 Mission Convocation. His written report is available in the convocation booklet available online at thenalc.org.

My written report is found on page 78 in your booklets. It hits on some of the highlights from this past year, along with some of the challenges we faced. It is presented as a summary of the work we have been doing, between myself and our staff, as well as some of the significant progress that has happened within the North American Lutheran Church as we respond in faith to the calling we have to be ambassadors for the Gospel, disciples of and witnesses for the person and work of Jesus Christ.

It also calls attention to the more-than-significant steps being taken in our North American Lutheran Seminary in the areas of faculty additions, the expansion of our "hub and spokes" model, which now includes six seminaries in seven locations, as well as the strategic steps being taken to raise up the next generation of pastors who understand our identity in the NALC and how we are committed to sharing in the work entrusted to us by our Lord Jesus, to name just a few. We'll be hearing more about our seminary in their report tomorrow.

It is not my intent in this verbal report to rehearse all of what you have in print, but rather to offer a few thoughts and reflections that are not included in the summary document you have.

Let me start by saying, in general, that what's behind much of what we are doing in these early teenage years of our existence — the immediate and day-to-day tasks, as well as the more far-reaching goals we have set for our future — are designed to put into practice as a denomination what we say on paper are the priorities we have. Even though we're not in the denominational infancy stage any longer, we're not far-enough along where the assumptions we all



FROM THE BISHOP

REV. DR. DAN SELBO
BISHOP

share about who we are and what drives us are not automatically the default mode for us without a more focused intentionality at the same time.

If we are, for example, as we say, Christ Centered, then what we do and how we do it needs to be done and lived out in such a way as to become a direct reflection of who He is and what He has called us to be about.

If this is a Mission Driven church body, as we claim it to be, that only remains true if the priorities we set, individually and together, and how we go after them are driven by the mission given to us in Jesus.

If we are Traditionally Grounded, then we must never stray from that which is at the heart of our witness and the foundation of our confession — the authority of Scripture, the centrality of the creeds and the Lutheran Confessions, and the ongoing commitment we make to affirm the legacy of our heritage and pass on that same faith that was once delivered to us by the saints.

And if we are Congregationally Focused, then our focus needs to be on what happens at the congregational level. That is and it will always be the front line for mission and ministry in this world — the primary place where followers of Jesus Christ come together each week to hear the Word and to receive the Sacraments and where they are

Continued on Page 17

strengthened and fed and then sent out to bear the Name of Jesus, to witness to what God has done for all people in Him, and, in the process, be about the work of making disciples of others until that Great Day when our Lord will return again.

Now, I share that Core Value summary with you, not so much as a reminder of who we are and what we committed ourselves to be about when we first started, but more so as a way of framing the fact that our strategies and priorities and commitments as a denomination today continue to be built and centered and grounded in the things we hold to be at our core. Because these values are at the heart of our existence, they need to remain at the heart of the work we do.

In the same way, those same central and foundational Core Values, because we are a congregationally focused church body, need to be at the heart and center of what you are doing and what drives you in your own congregational settings. This cuts both ways for us in our shared work. We all need to be about and committed to the same things if we hope together to reflect the priorities and values we hold.

Now, before this report turns into a sermon, let me say that I am encouraged as I travel around our denomination to see and to hear and to witness how those same four Core Values are truly becoming the identity we have in our churches. They are not just nice slogans we hold up to show the world we belong to Jesus. They are becoming and have become the witness we are offering in our congregations, communities and throughout the world in the Name of Christ, and for that I give thanks to God.

As far as what's happening in our congregations, and here, I'm not telling you anything you don't already know, we are all facing the reality of what's going on in our culture as our societies in Canada and in the United States continue to drift in directions inconsistent with the values we share as followers of Jesus. There's no question that it is more challenging today to draw people into our churches than it was when many of us were growing up and

when the church was viewed and valued as central in family and community life. Such is no longer the case.

At the same time, because church membership is not as automatic and expected as it once was, I truly believe that the opportunity we have to share what we know to be true in Jesus, to speak in favor of what God has done for and promised to us, and to invite people into a community where their value is not based upon who they are and what they have done, but upon whose they are and the value they have been given in Him, is greater than it has been for some time.

I'd encourage all of you to not get discouraged by the somewhat reduced numbers we're experiencing, but to continue reaching out to those who were involved, even as you continue reaching out to new folks as well. In that regard, I'd encourage you take a serious look at the discipling materials we have available and begin using them, if you haven't already, with your members. In a climate where the church is not as prominent in our communities as it once was, people are, nonetheless, still hungry and searching and looking for answers to life's biggest questions. The discipling materials we have provide the tools needed to be more open in sharing our faith and caring for those around us in the name of Jesus. It's the calling we've been given and it's the work to which we must stay true.

In the NALC, we are now a church body made of 490 congregations throughout the United States and Canada. In this past year, we've added 19 to our fellowship, 17 the year prior, for a total of 36 congregations that have joined with us in the past two years. That's not dramatic growth, but it represents a steady increase of congregations finding out more about who we are and seeking to join with us in our work.

We continue to receive inquiries from congregations wanting to leave where they are and affiliate with a church body more closely aligned with what they believe. Those inquiries are now coming not only from our own predecessor bodies, but also from other denominations, most recently, from some of

the Methodist churches, who in their affiliation are going through some of the same challenges we faced when we left.

We also are facing a more challenging track when it comes to ELCA congregations that have expressed interest and, in some cases, have voted to leave and to join with us, that are not being released by their synods. This is nothing new, apart from the increased frequency and the battle ground becoming more intense. I don't want to say too much here because it's certainly not our mission strategy to go after churches affiliated somewhere else, but for those who are wanting to join us, we want to do everything can to make it possible.

Just as we already have in place an Ordination Under Special Circumstances track for ordaining pastors to serve in congregations where the "specialness" of their situation requires a differing approach, so we are beginning to look at the same thing for churches wishing to join us that are not being released as they had hoped. I'm not sure what an "Affiliation Under Special Circumstances" rostering might look like, but I'm planning to engage a small working group, post-convocation, to begin exploring the possibilities to see what creative ways and doors there might be for us to open and walk through. I'd ask you to keep that in your prayers.

In terms of congregational vacancies, we currently have 41 full-time vacancies (last I looked) with 37 pastors seeking new calls. Those numbers have increased a bit over the past few years and so the challenge is not going away. What is also happening, however, is that we're seeing an increased number of already ordained pastors from other denominations, expressing interest in joining us. We currently have about 35 pastors going through the vetting process and if and when they are approved, will be available for call. It's encouraging to see how the Holy Spirit continues to draw faithful pastors to us.

Beyond those full-time vacancies, however, we also have another 25 or so part-time vacancies needing support. With our commitment to provide pastoral support for all of our congregations, this is where it



Bishop Dan Selbo delivers his report to the mission convocation.

gets a bit more challenging and where we all need to work together to address the challenge we have.

Now, I'm not trying to dodge the bullet and pass this off to someone else, but with the structure we have in place and the way in which we have intentionally designed our church body to function from the bottom up, the reality is that those part-time vacancies are best covered when the local mission districts and their pastors work together to cover the vacancies that exist from within the mission district itself. And here, I'm not only suggesting but challenging each of the pastors here (active and retired), along with each of the congregations represented, to find ways to support those other churches with pulpit supply and the sacraments on a regular basis. In many of our mission districts, it's already happening and for that we give thanks. Where it's not, it needs to be. United as we are in Jesus, this is a challenge to which we all need to be willing to step up.

There are a lot of things I could mention if we had more time. There is some tremendous progress

Continued on Page 19

being made in the areas of congregational renewal and support, what we're doing to encourage our aging congregations to see their age not as a detriment but as an opportunity and a gift, and how we're continue to resource our congregations in the area of Youth and Family Ministries to support them in engaging their young people and helping to form (and transform) them into disciples of Jesus.

There are also some wonderful things happening in discipleship, with new materials being designed, beyond the ones I've already mentioned, to be used in families and with friends. If you need direction and support in getting things going in your congregations, don't hesitate to reach out. This is one of those areas of ministry that needs to be at the heart of what's happening in all of our congregations. Because if we miss this central part of our calling, the commission we've been given by our Lord, then we've missed what the calling and the Christian life are meant to be. Let's not make that mistake.

You'll be hearing more about our global mission work in the presentation on Friday, as well as having the opportunity to learn more firsthand in the workshops tomorrow. Our global impact and reach, working through our partnering sending agencies, are expanding, as are the number of global workers we have who are now representing us throughout the world. It's exciting to see what doors God is opening and to how our witness to the gospel message of Jesus continues to change lives.

The last thing I'll mention is a word about one of the staffing transitions taking place. About a year ago, I had a conversation with Gemechis Buba, who has been serving on our Mission Staff from (almost) day one. He was the driving force, as many of you know, behind much of the mission work we did, domestically and globally, for a good part of eight years. More recently, he has taken the lead in our international mission efforts as we have added staff to support some of the more domestic-focused work we do.

When we spoke, last year, he shared a bit about what God has been laying on his heart and about he

was praying about the doors opening in Ethiopia and the Middle East and about how he was sensing God's call to be more intentionally focused in that part of the world. Where that led was to a decision to do a six-month trial, January through June of this year, in which he and his family would work remotely for the NALC, while living in Ethiopia. Meanwhile he and we would be assessing whether that was a good plan to continue and, if so, what that might mean for his position on our staff.

That six-month period is now over, and he and I have spoken at some length about what would be best, not only for him and his family and for us, but for the kingdom work God is calling us to in the world. Gemechis is here with us at our Mission Convocation but is planning to return with his family to Ethiopia when our Convocation is finished where they will continue serving the Lord in connection with us, but with the freedom to be involved more directly with some of the ministries with which he has been involved for the past years.

Gemechis will remain on our staff, working in global mission, with his responsibilities limited to the work we are doing in that region and with his position reduced, beginning in September, to halftime. That change will open new possibilities for us and, at the same time, free him to be involved more directly with other opportunities on the ground.

Even though our staffing relationship with Gemechis will be changing, what will never change is the partnership and friendship we have with him in Christ. He has been and will always be a trusted colleague, a faithful witness to the Gospel, and a dear friend to me and to many of you. We'll be commissioning him, along with some of our global workers, on Friday morning. He'll also have a chance that day to share a few words with us. For now, let's thank Gemechis for the powerful and faithful and life-giving witness and inspiration he has been with us and for us and to us.

In closing, I realize that the calling we share in Jesus is not getting easier. I also realize (and remember) that our Lord never promised us that it would be. What He did promise is that His Word would not

DAVID WENDEL LEAVES NALC STAFF TO RETURN TO PARISH MINISTRY

The Rev. Dr. David Wendel has announced his resignation as assistant to the bishop for ministry and ecumenism for the North American Lutheran Church. He plans to return to parish ministry.

"I have appreciated my time serving the Lord and the NALC, from the earliest days through the first decade," Pastor Wendel said in an email to NALC deans and Executive Council members.

"I have completed a profile and will be interviewing for a full-time call, looking forward to being home more, preaching in one community of disciples. I have given the last 12 years to building up the larger church, it is time to serve as part of a local congregation, especially as the need is so great in terms of vacancies and empty pulpits," he said.

"Thank you for the opportunity to have served in the NALC as executive staff these many years. I hope I have furthered the life and work of the NALC and pray I have been of support and assistance to you in your work, to our pastors and congregations," he said in the email to the deans.

Pastor Wendel was called by the NALC as ministry coordinator in 2011. He was appointed to that position by newly-elected Bishop John Bradosky. Pastor Wendel's responsibilities included facilitating the call process for pastors and congregations. His title was changed to assistant to the bishop for ministry and ecumenism in 2012.

Pastor Wendel has been instrumental in the NALC's growth from its inception and has tirelessly worked to uplift the broader church community. He will continue to be involved in the NALC's ongoing ecumenical consultations.



Pastor David Wendel

"Having served with Pastor Wendel for the past four years, I have witnessed firsthand his passion for the Gospel, his commitment to the Church, and his love for the Lord Jesus," said Bishop Dan Selbo. "He has been a blessing to me and to many, and his presence on our staff will be missed. We do, nonetheless, know that God will continue to use his gifts as he is now transitioning to full-time parish ministry. We are thankful for his continued service with us in our ecumenical relationships."

"It is with a grateful heart that I offer a word of praise and sincere appreciation for the ministry of Pastor David

Wendel," said Bishop Bradosky. "His ministry is a testimony to giving Jesus first place in his life. He has been both a faithful servant of Christ Jesus and a servant leader in His Church. His faith is bold, and his doctrine firmly anchored in our Lutheran Confessions. I have watched him toil and strive in ministry, setting his hope on Christ regardless of the frustrating circumstances he faced. He has been a positive example in his faithful preaching, sound teaching, compassionate caring and generous giving."

"I pray that you will join me in taking a moment to give thanks to God for the gifts Pastor Wendel received from the Holy Spirit through prayer and the laying on of hands at his ordination that have blessed countless people throughout the North American Lutheran Church and many others through our relationships with other church bodies," Bishop Bradosky said. "He has faithfully represented the NALC in expanding and deepening our ecumenical relationship both nationally and internationally. I have experienced his gifts for ministry firsthand during our time serving together

Continued on Page 21

Continued from Page 20

in the NALC. Pastor Wendel has always been a source of encouragement, joy and humor while providing theological wisdom and creative solutions in our journey leading the NALC. I could not have done it without him, and I am glad I never had to. I trusted him completely and never doubted his word or his integrity. I was blessed to serve with him, and the Church was blessed to be guided by his leadership.

“As he continues to follow Christ Jesus serving in a new role and ministry, I am confident that the NALC will continue to be blessed as he remains faithful in his preaching, teaching and the administration of the Sacraments fulfilling all that our Lord Jesus called him to be and do as one of His disciples and a pastor of His Church,” Bishop Bradosky said.

We extend our heartfelt gratitude to Pastor Wendel for his unwavering commitment and service to the NALC. His contributions have undeniably enriched our community, and we pray for his continued success and blessings in his future endeavors.

Pastor Wendel may be contacted at dwendel@thenalc.org. His NALC email address will remain active.

TRIP TO ETHIOPIA

The NALC has had a relationship with the Ethiopian Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus for its entire history. A number of people from the NALC have been to visit our brothers and sisters in Ethiopia.

Commission Expeditions, a Recognized Ministry of the NALC, has a trip to Ethiopia scheduled in January led by Pastor John Conrad of First Lutheran Church in Floresville, Texas. They also hope to offer future trips as well.

If you would like to participate as a part of the Jan. 7-22, 2024, trip or arrange for another trip, contact Grace Spell of Commission Expeditions at 830-708-6425 or graceexpeditions@gmail.com.

ORDINATION



Jonathan Gowin was ordained on Aug. 13 at Peace Lutheran Church in Edmond, Oklahoma. Pastor Gowin serves as an NALC global worker in Gambia.

BISHOP'S REPORT

Continued from Page 19

return empty, that the Church that finally belongs to Him will continue forever, and that the calling and claim He has laid on our lives is one upon which we can depend. Now 14 years into it, the NALC is living proof that our Lord's words hold true.

It remains an honor for me to serve as your bishop. Thank you for the support you've given and for the many ways, over these past four years, in which you have been an encouragement to me, through your prayers, your ministries, and your daily and faithful walks with Christ.

May God continue to bless each of you in your ministries, and may our lives together be a living witness to our Lord Jesus.

TONY D. EDE JOINS NALC STAFF

Pastor Tony D. Ede has joined the NALC staff as a communications specialist. Pastor Ede will be serving in the NALC's Texas office and will also provide additional support to the general secretary. He starts his new role with the NALC on Oct. 1.

"We are so thankful and blessed to have Pastor Tony Ede join our NALC staff. His pastoral experience, his heart for the Lord, his love for the Church and its people, and his diverse educational background are among the many gifts and passions he brings to his position," said Bishop Dan Selbo. "I look forward to working with him and am excited to see how the Lord will use his gifts to benefit the NALC to the glory of Christ."

"We're pleased to have Pastor Tony Ede join the NALC communications team in this more permanent role. He's already been an essential team member as a volunteer technical director during Lutheran Week and Pastors' Conferences, and he's been actively involved in a number of other NALC initiatives, said Deacon Andrew Ames Fuller, NALC director of communications.

"We're excited to work with him every day as he enters this new call, and we're confident that his experience and dedication will greatly enhance our efforts to support our congregations across North America," Deacon Ames Fuller said.

Pastor Ede has been pastor of First Evangelical Lutheran Church in Manchester, Iowa, since 2013.

He has degrees in electronic communications and multimedia communications from Waldorf College in Forest City, Iowa. He graduated from Luther Seminary in St. Paul, Minnesota, in 2006. He earned a Master of Business Administration degree in 2017 from Upper Iowa University in Fayette, Iowa, with a concentration on organizational development.



Pastor Tony D. Ede

Pastor Ede has been active in the NALC, serving on the Iowa Mission District Council, NALC Renewal Team, Lutheran Week Planning Team, Communications Team, and Pastors' Conference Planning Team.

Beyond pastoral roles, he is an active community volunteer, a certified EMT and firefighter, and enjoys car shows and golf.

Tony and his wife LeAnn have three sons. LeAnn began teaching fifth grade language, reading and literature in the Fort Worth, Texas, school system this fall.

"We were obedient to God's will and His calling, especially when this opportunity came our way. I have full confidence in the dedicated staff of the North American Lutheran Church. My commitment to Jesus Christ, the Holy Scriptures, and the Lutheran Confessions will guide me in this new venture, strengthened by God's grace and love," Pastor Ede said.

MISSION GRANT APPLICATIONS

The NALC is now receiving applications for mission grants for global workers, global projects, mission starts, renewal and multi-cultural congregations.

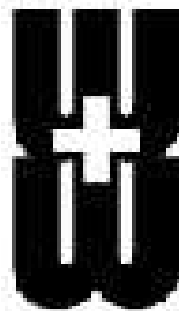
Please contact Pastor Carol Fryer, NALC mission specialist, at cfryer@thenalc.org or 917-442-5335 to receive an application.

The deadline to submit applications for 2024 grants is Nov. 15.

YOUTH AND FAMILY MINISTRY

NALC Young Adult Gathering "The Cross: Where Word and Witness Meet"

A week-long gathering for young adults is planned for May 5-11, 2024, in Winnipeg, Manitoba. Young adults, ages 18 to 28, from all over the continent will gather together to study the Word and witness.



Winnipeg is a city of almost 850,000 people. We will be ministering to the physical and social needs of the most vulnerable as well as being a witness for Christ and the Gospel during the day and studying the Word together in the evenings.

The cost of the gathering is only \$50 per participant, plus personal travel to Winnipeg. All costs, accommodations, food and transportation at the gathering are being sponsored by the Canadian Mission District.

Spaces are limited. All applications must be submitted by Dec. 1, 2023. To apply or for more information contact me at tpeters@thenalc.org.



WE BELONG
"I KNOW MY OWN AND MY OWN KNOW ME"

Continental Youth Gathering "We Belong"

People are getting excited about the upcoming Continental Youth Gathering July 1-4, 2024, in Boerne, Texas (near San Antonio). Registration will open in mid-October.

For more information on the youth gathering go to thenalc.org/cyg.



YOUTH AND FAMILY

REV. TERESA PETERS
DIRECTOR OF YOUTH
AND FAMILY MINISTRY

Special Needs Ministry

Have you ever wanted to start a special needs ministry in your congregation or wanted to know how to support individuals with special needs in your community?

Pastor Jason Dampier of Word of God Lutheran Church in Sharpsburg, Georgia, and Andi, the director of the congregation's Fish Stix Ministry will be sharing ways to make this possible.

The Fish Stix Ministry was developed in 2011 to serve the adult special needs community in their area. The ministry leaders and volunteers strive to provide quality, age-appropriate programming for its diverse group of differently-abled participants.

A Zoom meeting is scheduled for 10 a.m. ET on Tuesday, Oct. 10. If you would like the Zoom link sent to you, please email me at tpeters@thenalc.org.

Faith Formation Festivals

Would you like to host a Faith Formation Festival in your area? If so, contact me at tpeters@thenalc.org.

The goal of a Faith Formation Festival is to strengthen, encourage and equip anyone working with or related to young people. We invite speakers on a variety of topics that you identify as areas highly in need of instruction from a Biblical perspective. Once topics are chosen, each Faith Formation Festival is structured to meet the needs of your mission district or mission region. Faith Formation Festivals can be one or two-day events.

NALC DISASTER RESPONSE UPDATE

NALC Disaster Response is responding to the wildfire that devastated the island of Maui, Hawaii, on Aug. 8. The wildfire had been contained until Hurricane Dora started picking up wind speeds of over 80 miles per hour. Then the fire raged out of control with some people jumping into the ocean to escape the flames. There are still 380 people missing at this time.

NALC Disaster Response has been shipping gift cards for families who survived and has shipped a cargo container of emergency relief supplies. Additional gift cards and emergency supplies are planned.

Hurricane Idalia made landfall on the gulf coast of Florida on Aug. 30 and moved across the state and

into the Carolinas, causing significant flooding and wind damage.

NALC Disaster Response has established emergency relief in Perry, Florida, and will continue to assist the families impacted there and provide long term recovery, rebuilding as many homes as possible.

Gift cards and supplies may be sent to NALC Disaster Response; 16500 Noble Ave.; Caldwell, OH 43724. Monetary donations for NALC Disaster Response may be mailed to North American Lutheran Church; PO Box 860565; Minneapolis, MN 55486-0565. Please indicate “disaster response” on your check.

Go to thenalc.org for disaster updates or to give online. Thank you for all your prayers and support.

CHURCH PLANTING CHALLENGE

What then is Apollos? What is Paul? Servants through whom you believed, as the Lord assigned to each. I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the growth. So neither he who plants nor he who waters is anything, but only God who gives the growth.

— 1 Corinthians 3:5-7 ESV

Scripture is calling us to plant the Church of Jesus.

How can we do it?

- + A single church can plant in a nearby location.
- + Several churches can come together and start.
- + A mission district can plant somewhere in its area.
- + A few people can plant a house church.
- + A gathering of people in a particular place can plant a mission start.
- + Members of an already established congregation can go and plant.

How can the NALC help you to plant a church?

- + Prayer.
- + Demographic information.
- + Financial support.
- + “How To” start-up steps.
- + Constant encouragement.

We want to challenge all of our congregations and mission districts in the NALC to plant a church, so the Gospel of Jesus can be shared, and disciples are made.

We ask that you first pray about this opportunity, and then contact Pastor Brad Hales, director of church planting and aging ministries, at 540-270-1026 or bhales@thenalc.org.

If the church is going to grow, it needs to be planted. This is what mission is all about!