



February 22, 2013

Dear Disciples of Jesus Christ in the North American Lutheran Church,

After previous Convocations recommended that the NALC apply for membership in the Lutheran World Federation (LWF), our 2012 Convocation voted by the required two-thirds majority to pursue membership in the LWF. The decision to send this resolution to our congregations for ratification was not an easy decision. Many of us were concerned about maintaining the integrity of our Biblical and doctrinal values even as we remembered the painful, but necessary, steps we took in forming the North American Lutheran Church.

Over these past six months our congregations have engaged in prayerful discernment, investigation, consultation, and debate concerning the resolution to pursue membership in the Lutheran World Federation. I deeply appreciate and understand the concerns expressed by those on both sides. The voting has now concluded, and I share with you the results of your deliberation and decision. A total of 228 congregations voted. Of those, 167 voted "Yes," and 61 congregations voted "No." In order to fulfill the required two-thirds approval for adoption, 152 "Yes" votes were needed. The total "Yes" votes have exceeded the two-thirds level and the resolution is adopted.

A major concern in our deliberation was the section in the LWF constitution which declares that all LWF churches are in altar and pulpit fellowship. What altar and pulpit fellowship means is not defined by the LWF constitution. In our preliminary conversations in the application process we were assured that, for the LWF, altar and pulpit fellowship is "a goal—a hope, but not a reality." At the present time, there is no clarity with regard to this term. The application process with the LWF will seek to gain such clarity, with insight gained from our Joint Commission on Theology and Doctrine. Moving forward in the process will be determined by such clarity.

It is important to note that within the last month, the Ethiopian Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus (EECMY) has decided to sever its relationship with the ELCA and the Church of Sweden. In spite of EECMY's severed relationship with these church-bodies, EECMY remains firmly committed to membership in the LWF. President Idosa of the EECMY serves as chair of the East Africa Section of the LWF. He and other African church leaders maintain that the ELCA and the Church of Sweden are the ones who are guilty of creating division within the LWF. Both he and the EECMY intend to retain membership in the LWF. This situation provides further confirmation that the goal of fellowship within the LWF is a hope and goal but not a reality. Their participation and membership in the LWF now provides a template for our own. I personally believe that we in the NALC should do all we can to stand with our Ethiopian brothers and sisters. The risks they have taken for the sake of the Word of God deserve our deepest respect and admiration. Through our application for membership, we will make clear our support for the positions of the EECMY.

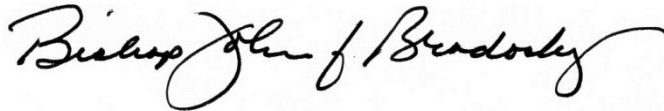
It is also important to note that the Lutheran World Federation is what its name indicates: a federation of churches, but not a church. Joining such a federation is not a shortcut to the church-to-church processes we already have in place for establishing such relationships. We will follow our constitution and polity with regard to membership in the LWF.

While the decision to apply for membership in the LWF is completed, it is not the end of the process, but the beginning. Now that we have spoken through a two-thirds vote of our Convocation and a two-thirds ratifying vote of our congregations, we will begin the process of applying for LWF membership. There is much work to be done in the application process, and no one can assume the outcome of that process. I do want to assure you, however, that as we move forward in our interaction with LWF leaders, we will be diligent in our commitment to faithfully represent the NALC without equivocation or accommodation. We will stand firmly on our values and the authority of the Word of God for all matters of life and faith, unashamed of the consequences for doing so.

We move forward as a church, affirming our polity that the primary focus for decision-making, mission, and ministry resides in the congregation. We will also pursue participating in structures that express our identity as a part of the universal Christian community. Regardless of the results of our application to join the LWF, our commitment to that end remains unchanged.

During this Lenten season of repentance, reflection and renewal, may God grant us the presence of Christ and the indwelling of the Holy Spirit as we seek to be His one body—united in faith, discipleship and mission!

In Christ,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Bishop John F. Bradosky". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a large initial "B" and "J".

Bishop John F. Bradosky