



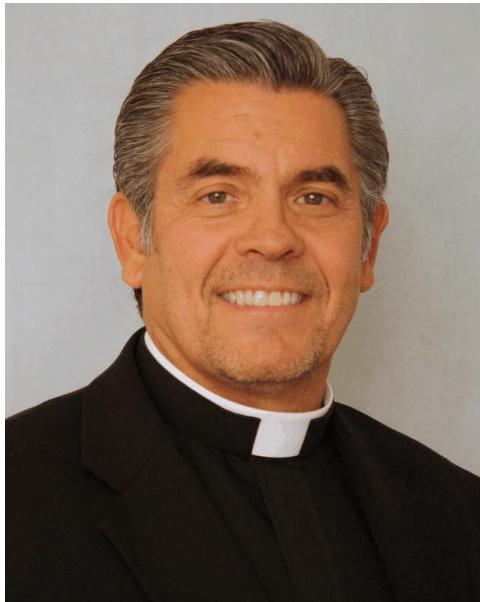
## Pastor David Wendel is called as NALC Ministry Coordinator

Pastor David Wendel of Colorado Springs, Colo., has been called to serve as Ministry Coordinator for the North American Lutheran Church.

The Ministry Coordinator will assist congregations in finding pastors and assist pastors in finding calls in NALC congregations.

"In the process of prayerful discernment for the appropriate addition to our staff, as Ministry Coordinator, I began to focus on Pastor David Wendel," said NALC Bishop John Bradosky.

"From our initial conversations, it was obvious that he possesses the spiritual maturity, experience and theological expertise to do more than simply fill this post. He brings wisdom, sensitivity and experience in the realm of ecumenical relationships. He has a deep respect for the Office of Ministry and a thorough understanding of the essential skills and attributes for leadership in the Church. His love for his own congregation over the past 25 years translates into a deep respect for laity and the critical importance of the local congregation for advancing the mission of the Church.



*Pastor David Wendel*

"Each conversation and shared experience with Pastor Wendel over these past several months has served to confirm the guidance of the Holy Spirit in this selection process," he said.

"His relationship approach to ministry, pastoral care and great sense of humor have served to increase my excitement and enthusiasm in commending his ministry to you. With passion and enthusiasm, he embodies the values we share in the NALC, and I am certain you will experience both his ability and integrity as he serves," Bishop Bradosky said.

"While I am excited and pleased to have accepted this new position, I have to say that I was surprised and a bit shocked when Bishop Bradosky first asked me to prayerfully consider accepting a call to serve as the new Ministry Coordinator of the NALC," Pastor Wendel said.

"My call — and so my passion — from an early age was to parish ministry as a parish pastor. Every gift God has given me and my seminary education have prepared me for ministry within the parish," he said. "After 30 years, I am still energized by the call to Word and Sacrament ministry within a local congregation.

"I believe I said a few years ago that the last thing I would ever want to do would be leave parish ministry and serve as a staff person in the larger church. And yet, my passion for and commitment to parish life and ministry may very well be the reason for Bishop Bradosky's invitation for me to serve as Ministry Coordinator," he said.

"The NALC is intentionally congregationally-focused. As a

***Continued on Page 2***

# Pastor Wendel is committed to parish ministry and supporting the ministry of congregations

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parish pastor for three decades, I bring to this position an appreciation for the joys and blessings — as well as the challenges and struggles — of the parish and the parish pastor.

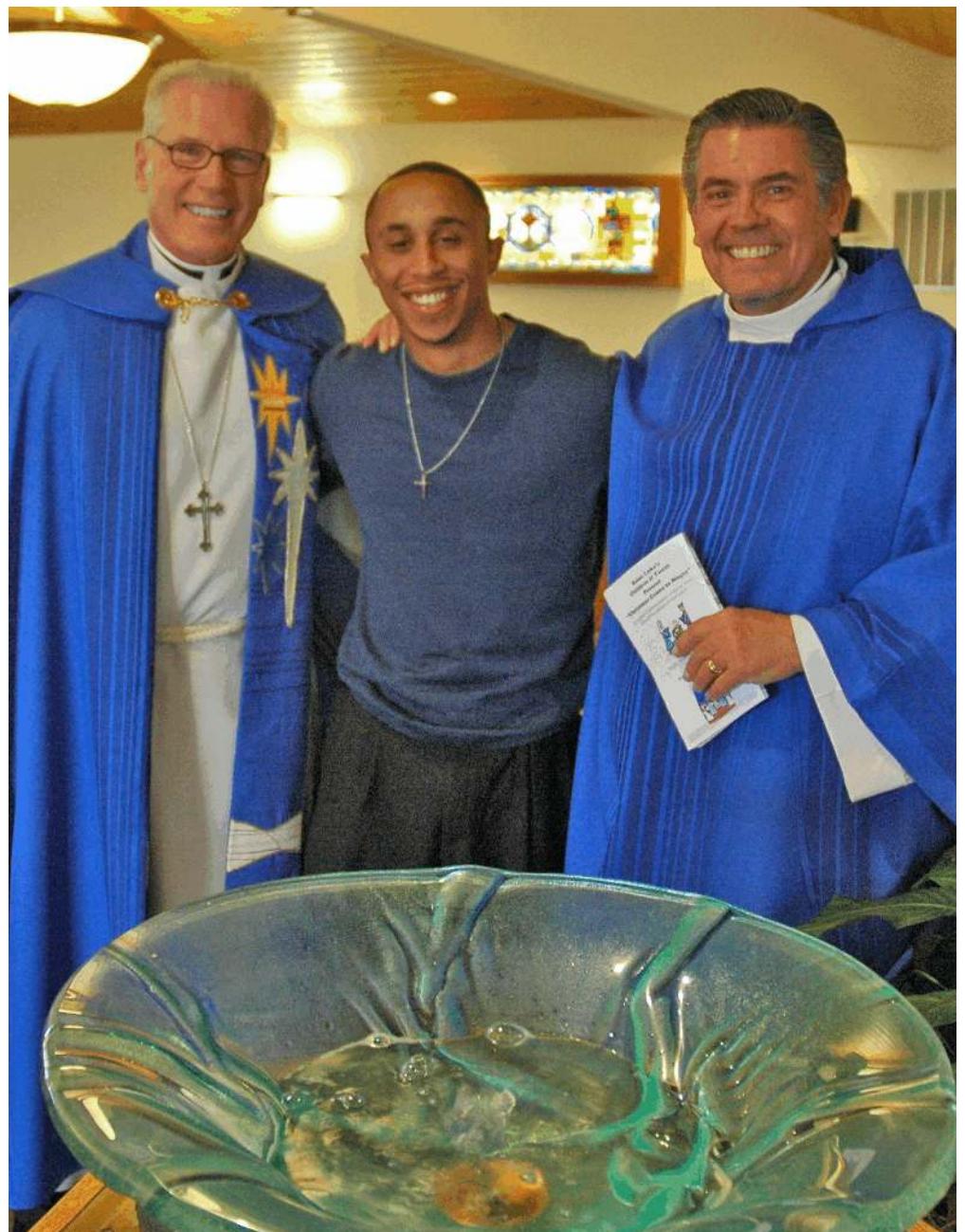
"One of my beloved bishops used to say, 'I'll try not to make things worse!' I will go a step further and promise that I will try to make things better — especially with regard to transition and mobility within the NALC, one of my primary areas of responsibility.

"I hope that pastors and congregations will find I have a listening ear, especially when there are suggestions that might improve or strengthen our call process and how we relate to pastors and parishes in transition.

"Without being naive, I do hope that we can continue to develop a positive, respectful and helpful way of relating to clergy and parishes, building on the very personal touch that was the hallmark of Bishop Emeritus Paull Spring's relationships within the NALC," he said.

"I have always been impressed with the availability of Bishop Spring, and now Bishop Bradosky. I will do my best to respond quickly to pastors and congregations who desire guidance, answers and assistance."

Pastor Wendel has been pastor of Saint Luke's Lutheran Church



***Bishop John Bradosky and Pastor David Wendel pose with Daniel Santiago Jr., following Daniel's baptism Dec. 4 at Saint Luke's Lutheran Church in Colorado Springs.***

in Colorado Springs for 25 years. Saint Luke's congregation voted unanimously to join the NALC in October 2010.

"It will be difficult to leave the parish after 25 years serving as

pastor of Saint Luke's," Pastor Wendel said. "I love the people at Saint Luke's dearly and was blessed to be a partner in such a faithful, confessional Lutheran ministry.

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# Pastor Wendel has been leader in ecumenism

**Continued from Page 2**

"I appreciate what it means to find the right pastor for the right congregation — leading to long and fruitful ministry. Although after 25 years, I'm never quite sure if they've trained me well, or vice versa," Pastor Wendel said.

"I see my transition to service within the NALC as a missionary endeavor of Saint Luke's — as the good folks in Colorado Springs will be sending Susan and me off to serve in the same Gospel endeavor, but in a different context," he said.

Pastor Wendel has served as the chair of the NALC's Ecumenical and Inter-Lutheran Relations Committee. He joined Bishop John Bradosky and Bishop Emeritus Paull Spring in meeting with Roman Catholic ecumenical officials in Rome in September. Ecumenical work will continue in his new position.

"As this new position will be focused on ministry transition and mobility of clergy, it will also be my role to continue to build on our already significant work in ecumenism and inter-Lutheran relations," he said.

"As the NALC is traditionally-grounded, we are taking our place alongside other Christians who hold fast to the authority of the Word of God; Biblical teaching with regard to the revelation of God as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit; Jesus Christ as the unique Savior of the world, and His call to mission and ministry.

"Our ecumenical efforts — as well as our conversations with Lutherans in North America and worldwide — will focus on our commitment to unity that is grounded in the Word of God and solid confessional teachings. I look forward to continuing that work in my new call," he said.

"Ministry transition and ecumenism will just be the first two aspects of my new position," he explained. "In addition, I will serve to assist the bishop in whatever ways are helpful to him and supportive of the overall ministry of the pastors and congregations of the NALC.

"I hope to support and encourage all our pastors in their ministry of Word and Sacrament, and celebrate the faithful work of our congregations. I would particularly appreciate the chance to participate in celebrations marking anniversaries of ordination and congregational anniversaries, as this is one way that we can fulfill our goal of being congregationally-focused," he said.

Pastor Wendel was born and raised in Columbus, Ind. His family members were charter members of First Lutheran Church there.

He graduated from Indiana University with a bachelor's degree in Speech Communication. He is a 1981 graduate of the Lutheran Theological Seminary at Gettysburg and served his internship at Bethlehem Lutheran Church in Los Alamos, N.M.

He earned a Doctor of Ministry in Preaching from the Association

of Chicago Theological Schools in 2001.

He served as pastor of Trinity Lutheran Church in Hobbs, N.M., before being called to Saint Luke's in Colorado Springs in 1986. Pastor Wendel also serves as provisional dean for the Rocky Mountain Mission District of the NALC, which includes Colorado, Utah, New Mexico and the El Paso area of Texas.

In 2011, he completed a three-week course in Rome titled, "Ecumenism and Inter-Religious Relations from a Roman Catholic Perspective," taught by the Atonement Friars who sponsor the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity.

Pastor Wendel has been a member of the Society of the Holy Trinity since 2002. The Society of the Holy Trinity is a ministerium of Lutheran clergy committed to supporting and encouraging one another in the fulfillment of their ordination vows through commitment to Scripture and the Lutheran Confessions, obedience to Jesus, daily prayer and quarterly retreats within the Great Tradition of the Christian Church. He is the dean of the society's Sangre de Cristo Chapter.

Pastor Wendel and his wife, Susan Riches, have two adult children and two grandsons.

Pastor Wendel will be working at the NALC offices in Hilliard, Ohio. He will be moving to the Columbus area in January.

He can be reached by e-mail at dwendel@thenalc.org.

# Becky Seifert joins staff of NALC

*She joins Gleason, Jacobson and Sosebee in key support positions*



**Becky Seifert**



**Anne Gleason**



**Kathy Jacobson**



**Rachel Sosebee**

Rebecca "Becky" Seifert has joined the staff of the North American Lutheran Church as Assistant to the Executive Staff.

Becky will be working as an executive assistant to Bishop John Bradosky; Pastor Mark Chavez, General Secretary; and Pastor David Wendel, Ministry Director. She will work at the NALC office in Hilliard, Ohio.

Becky, a Columbus native, has a degree in computer science from Ohio State University. She and her husband, Larry, have two sons and a daughter. They live in Columbus.

Prior to coming to the NALC, she worked as Financial Controller for the Southern Ohio Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America for 16 years.

Becky assumes some of the responsibilities handled by Rachel Sosebee at the NALC main office in Ohio.

Rachel Sosebee has worked part-time since May. She will continue

to work in the NALC office as Assistant to the Missions Director, Pastor Gemechis Buba.

Rachel, originally from Napoleon, Ohio, has a master's degree in lay ministry from Trinity Lutheran Seminary and a bachelor's degree from Capital University, both in Columbus, in religious studies.

Rachel and her husband, Neil, have a 3½-year-old son, Henry. They live in Grove City, Ohio.

Anne Gleason is the Financial Administrator for the NALC. She holds a similar position for Lutheran CORE and works in the New Brighton, Minn., office shared by Lutheran CORE and the NALC.

Anne has seen the history of the reform movements in North American Lutheranism first hand. She was hired in 2000 as the Financial Administrator for the WordAlone Network. She assumed similar responsibilities for Lutheran CORE upon its formation in 2005 and for the NALC in 2010.

Anne is a Minneapolis native. She is a graduate of Augsburg College in Minneapolis with a degree in religion with an emphasis on youth ministry. She and her husband, Jeffery, live in Roseville, Minn.

Anne enjoys singing and is in two choirs, her church choir and a community choir.

"It's been an interesting journey from the beginning of WordAlone to the beginning of a new denomination," Anne said. "It's amazing to see how God has blessed the growth of the NALC in this first year."

Kathy Jacobson is the Administrative Assistant in the Minnesota office serving both the NALC and Lutheran CORE.

Kathy is also a native of the Twin Cities. She and her husband, Jim, live in White Bear Lake, Minn., where they are immersed in home-improvement projects.

Kathy sings in the same community choir as Anne.

# Advent message from Bishop Bradosky

I trust you have taken time to enjoy the celebration of Thanksgiving. We have much for which we are truly thankful in the North American Lutheran Church.

As we begin a new church year with the First Sunday of Advent, we are filled with hope and anticipation in all this new year holds. Our hope, anticipation and potential are focused in laser-like accuracy on Christ. He is our hope, salvation, redemption and the entire content of the Gospel we proclaim.

During this season of preparation for Christmas, it is so easy to be overwhelmed with the “busyness” that preoccupies the culture around us.

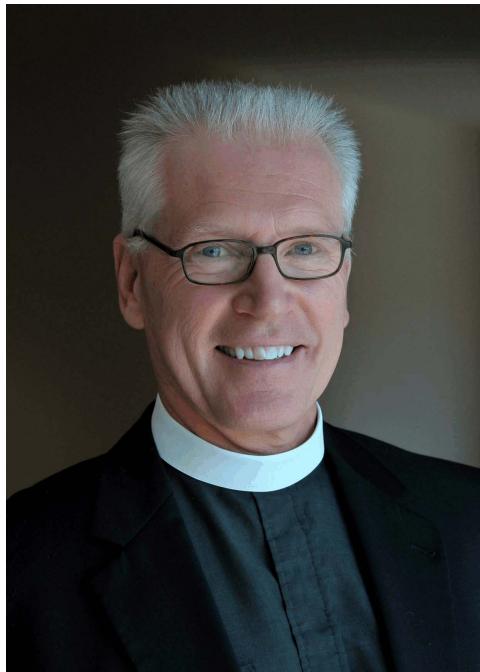
I invite you to counteract that influence with a renewed commitment to prayer and meditation throughout Advent. There is no better way to begin this new year as leaders and congregations, and as the North American Lutheran Church. There is no greater means to strengthen our witness than through our prayer life. The effectiveness of our mission and ministry depends on it.

Luther writes:

“Guard yourself carefully against those false, deluding ideas which tell you, ‘Wait a little while. I will pray in an hour; first I must attend to this or that.’”

“If I should neglect prayer but a single day, I should lose a great deal of the fire of faith.”

“To be a Christian without prayer is no more possible than to be alive without breathing.”



**Bishop John Bradosky**

Through prayer we bear witness to the truth that we rely on the Lord's action and activity. We can accomplish nothing apart from Him. Our work in His body, the Church, is only accomplished by His power and strength.

Advent reminds us of how important it is to wait on Him. His grace entered this world in a more amazing and profound way than we could ever design or imagine. As we wait expectantly on the hand of God to move, we are certain that when He does move our experience will be one of awe and wonder.

It is through prayer that we place our hands into the hand of God. In prayer we make ourselves available to God to be a part of His design, His will, His mission, and His work. We do so with the certainty that even as He used those whose stories we read in the Scriptures, so He will use us to make Himself known and to accomplish His purposes.

The cast of characters who comprise the Church militant is new with each generation. Now we have the privilege that those faithful believers who came before us had — to point to Jesus, to follow Jesus, to proclaim the Gospel of His redemption and salvation, to serve Him in fulfilling His mission in our ministry, to boldly love and care for others in His name until they too come to faith in Him.

In this season of Advent, we encounter many generations of those who shared the prophesy, announced His coming and believed the Messiah would save the world. We meet the cast of those who were used by God to prepare the way, labor through His birth and care for His needs. From the most simple, supportive role to the most complex, all have a part to play in this redemptive story and that story is ours.

Over the past 20 years, I have maintained a tradition during the season of Advent that I share in the hope of also blessing you. I read *Martin Luther's Christmas Book*, translated and arranged by Roland Bainton. As I consider each section, I read the related Scripture passages and Luther's reflections, meditating on both. There is sufficient material for devotional reading and meditation through the celebration of Epiphany.

Thank you for your faithful service to Christ and your partnership in this ministry we share as the North American Lutheran Church.

Have a blessed Advent season!

**Bishop John Bradosky**

# Regional Mission Districts are organizing

Congregations of the North American Lutheran Church are organizing regional Mission Districts. Ten Mission Districts have formally organized, and others are in the process of doing so.

**The Mid-Northeast Mission District** — western Pennsylvania, western New York, and western Maryland — met on Dec. 3 at Emmanuel Lutheran Church in Export, Pa. There are 25 congregations in the Mid-Northeast Mission District. Pastor Eric Riesen of Zion Lutheran Church in Pittsburgh, Pa., was elected as Dean. Three clergy and three lay members were elected to the Mission District Council.

**The Great Rivers Mission District** met Nov. 5 at First Lutheran Church in Paxton, Ill. Pastor James Lehmann of Immanuel Lutheran Church in Thomasboro, Ill., was elected as Dean. The Great Rivers Mission District includes 14 NALC congregations and 21 pastors in Illinois. There are more than 8,000 members in the Mission District, and its congregations average 575 members.

The members of the District Council were also elected. Clergy members are: Pastor Carl Rasmussen, First, Kirkland; Pastor Michael Sculley, St. John, Flanagan; and Pastor Donna Smith, Champaign. Lay members are: David Buhr, First, Paxton; Con Campbell, St. John, Danforth; and Judy Rademaker, Immanuel, Thomasboro.

The Florida Mission District will meet on Dec. 10 at First Evangelical Lutheran Church in West Palm Beach, Fla., for its constituting Convocation.

The other Mission Districts that have formally organized are:

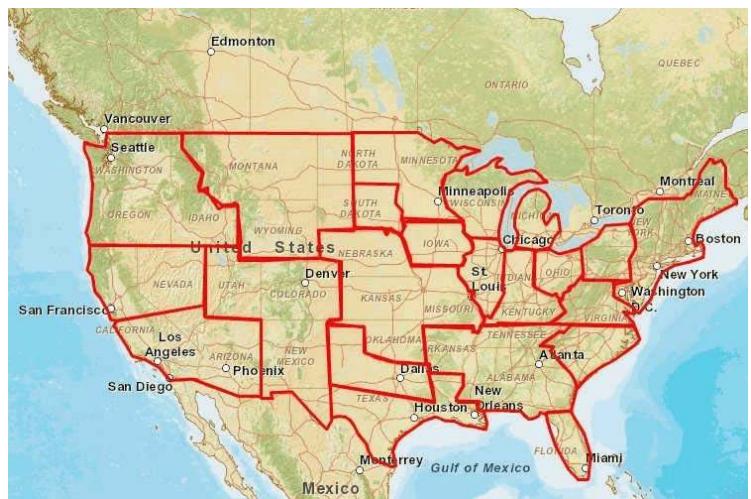
## **Atlantic Mission District**

(Eastern Pennsylvania, eastern New York, eastern Maryland, New Jersey, Maine, New Hampshire, Connecticut, Delaware, Massachusetts, Vermont and Washington, D.C.)

Dean: Pastor Michael Tavella, Abington, Pa.

## **Carolinas Mission District**

Dean: Pastor Carl M. Haynes, Salisbury, N.C.



*Map of NALC Mission Districts*

## **Eastern South Dakota Mission District**

Dean: Pastor Randy Eisenbeisz, Hayti, S.D.

## **Iowa Mission District**

Dean: Pastor Ken Kimball, Waterville, Iowa.

## **Minnkota Mission District**

(Minnesota and eastern North Dakota)

Dean: Pastor Tim Lundein, Erskine, Minn.

## **Ohio Mission District**

Dean: Pastor Dan Powell, Springfield, Ohio.

## **Western Dakotas, Montana and Wyoming Mission District**

Dean: Pastor David Baer, Whitewood, S.D.

## **Wisconsin and Upper Michigan Mission District**

Dean: Pastor Roy A. Harrisville III, Menomonie, Wis.

The NALC constitution explains the purpose of the Mission Districts as: "Congregations shall join in collaboration to fulfill most effectively the ministry and mission of the NALC."

Each Mission District will elect as Dean a pastor who will work with the NALC Bishop in conducting similar ministry to the Bishop in their regional area. "Deans shall serve as pastor to ordained ministers, their families, and congregations, and will conduct a ministry of teaching and visitation with ordained ministers and congregations," the constitution says.

# 'Gift of Hope' is a new way to support the NALC's mission congregations

"Gift of Hope" is the name of a new way for congregations and individuals to support NALC mission congregations.

Congregations and individuals wishing to support start-up congregations can see what is needed and supply either monetary or physical gifts.

"The NALC is continually exploring ways to support mission congregations and engage established congregations in being mission-driven," said Pastor Gemicchis Buba, NALC Missions Director.

The idea came from a pastor who was looking for such a list so that he could invite members to buy a "Gift of Hope" instead of more "stuff" for themselves, he explained.

"We plan to share requests and reports on the NALC website so individuals and congregations will have practical and tangible ways to support our mission congregations and see how they are being supported by others," Pastor Buba said.

Mission congregations were asked to create a "gift of hope" list of items costing \$20 or more.

Some of the items requested by congregations include Bibles, hymnals, Communion ware, tables, chairs, and copyright licences.

The lists are available online at [www.thenalc.org](http://www.thenalc.org). You may also contact Rachel Sosebee at the NALC office at 614-777-5709 or [rrosebee@thenalc.org](mailto:rrosebee@thenalc.org) for more information.



*Pastor Marilyn Larsen, center, was ordained at St. Stephen's Lutheran Church in Portland, Texas, on Nov. 5. She is serving as the mission developer pastor for Resurrection Lutheran Church in Corpus Christi, Texas. Pictured are, from left: Pastor Ron Walter; Pastor Michael Gabby, St. Stephen's; Pastor John Forbus; Pastor Larsen; Pastor Thomas McCrone; Pastor Norm Sulaica, Our Savior, Three Rivers, Texas; and Pastor Tim Christ, Joy, Richmond, Texas.*

# Congregational leaders gather in North Carolina for Revitalization Conference

One hundred congregational leaders gathered Nov. 3-5 at Lake Junaluska, N.C., for the NALC's first Revitalization Conference. The theme for the conference was "Discovering and Releasing Your Missional Capacity."

Attendees had a full schedule with five worship opportunities, six presentations, and small group time. Six presenters shared their expertise and life experience from ministry.

Pastor Gemechis Buba, NALC Missions Director, gave the opening presentation. He shared the "Missional Capacity Assessment: Discover, Maximize and Release Your Missional Capacity."

Pastor Buba walked participants through a Biblically-based congregation strengths discovery



*Pastor Dave Keener of Christ the King Lutheran Church in Evans, Ga., addresses the Revitalization Conference.*

tool and taught how to apply those assets for a stronger Great Commission impact.

Pastor Sandy Mitchell of Trinity Lutheran Church, Ashland, Ohio, followed with a presentation on "How to Build a Climate Where Members and Visitors Want to

Volunteer." Pastor Mitchell shared tools for creating a permission-giving church culture where ministry can be given away, ministry involvement is based on passion and gifts, and the staff and leadership are purpose-driven.

Pastor Dave Keener of Christ the King Lutheran Church in Evans, Ga., talked about the importance of prayer. Pastor Keener shared his personal experience with the power of being prayed for and gave examples of ways to encourage prayer in a congregation's life.

After a full morning and afternoon of presentations attendees were invited to enjoy the beautiful grounds and to reflect on what they had heard. They also began working on action plans for when they returned home.

The evening presentation was "Evangelism as a Matter of



*Those at the Revitalization Conference met in small groups to discuss presentations and how to apply learning to their local congregations.*

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Identity: Lose the Image — Gain the Identity" by NALC Bishop John Bradosky. Bishop Bradosky explained that evangelism first flows out of our identity as a disciple of Christ.

Pastor Todd Kornahrens of Living Water Lutheran Church in Springboro, Ohio, offered a presentation on "Doing Mission without Money." He drew on experiences from both his first call in a small rural congregation and his current role as pastor in a new mission congregation and their sensible approaches to mission. He shared many examples of free mission project ideas that not only share the Gospel in tangible ways with the community but also raise a culture of mission and discipleship in a congregation.

The last presentation was a recap and commissioning by Pastor Buba and Pastor Keener.

Presenters led and preached at the morning and evening worship services.

Bishop Emeritus Paull Spring preached at the opening worship, and Bishop Bradosky presided over Communion. Lynn Kickingbird, chair of Lutheran CORE's Steering Committee and a member of Peace Lutheran Church, Edmond, Okla., assisted with worship. Bishop Bradosky preached for the closing worship, and Pastor Mitchell presided.

Worship was planned by Kevin Reynolds and Pastor Keener, both from Christ the King Lutheran Church in Evans, Ga. An impromptu music team was formed from conference attendees to lead worship.

At the end of the conference one attendee reported, "This conference has been a turning point for me! I am a lay member and have not been active in missions in the past. No

question that I will be very active and spread the Word with purpose!"

The event was organized by the NALC's Revitalization and Leadership Mission Teams. The purpose of these teams is to raise mission focused leaders and to support energizing and growth in congregations through the sharing of the Gospel.

One practical way the whole mission team hopes to fulfill those goals is through two conferences each year: a mission planters conference in the spring and a revitalization conference in the fall.

In addition, the team will build activities and resources that focus on developing the Evangelical Lutheran Mission Society — connecting congregations to developing missions and global missionaries, and resourcing new churches.



*Those at the NALC Revitalization Conference pose for a group photo.*

# NALC retirement and insurance plans are being well received

The new retirement and health insurance plans for North American Lutheran Church and Lutheran CORE pastors and church employees are being well received.

Pastors and congregations have been busy completing forms to meet a Dec. 12 deadline to begin the Lutheran Benefits health insurance plan on Jan. 1.

The high level of interest comes, in part, because NALC pastors and congregations were notified that they are no longer eligible to remain in the ELCA Board of Pensions plans in a Nov. 23 letter from Pastor Jeffrey Thiemann, ELCA BOP president. The change is effective Jan. 1. Those receiving retirement, disability or survivor benefits are not affected.

The ELCA decision caught some NALC pastors and congregations by surprise because the ELCA Board of Pensions has permitted former ELCA congregations to participate in its plans for several years. Some NALC pastors had not planned on acting immediately to move their retirement and insurance plans.

Pastor Thiemann, who became president of the Board of Pensions on Oct. 1, explained that the ELCA BOP made the decision because the NALC chose to offer alternative insurance and retirement plans. The Board of Pensions had agreed to cover NALC pastors and congregations "if the Board of Pensions was the NALC's sole benefits provider."

"We are deeply disappointed that the ELCA Board of Pensions has chosen to backtrack on its long-standing policy for former ELCA congregations and pastors, but at the same time we are ever more thankful that we developed alternative benefits plans in partnership with Lutheran CORE," said NALC Bishop John Bradosky.

"We have made our decision to act in the best interest of our pastors and congregations, responding to their requests and needs. The ELCA BOP has made its decisions as a way to address the needs and concerns of its constituents," Bishop Bradoksy said.

"We will continue to value the services the BOP provides for NALC pastors who remain unaffected by these decisions," he said.

The NALC and Lutheran CORE are working with Hahn Financial Group of Sioux Falls, S.D., to provide the Lutheran Benefits plans.

The new Lutheran Benefits medical plan is available as a package with short-term disability insurance, long-term disability insurance, life insurance, critical illness insurance, and access to an employee assistance program. A person on the health plan will also be able to participate in optional dental and vision plans.

Flexible spending account options are available for health expenses, dependent care expenses, transportation or parking expenses.

The Lutheran Benefits health insurance plan will provide coverage similar to that provided by the ELCA Board of Pensions plan. However, unlike the ELCA plan, the NALC plan will not cover elective abortions or partners in same-sex sexual relationships.

Cost comparisons indicate that the packaged insurance costs will be less for most congregations compared to the ELCA plan and compared to other health plan options available to congregations. Congregations providing coverage for a pastor, spouse and family could save hundreds of dollars a month compared to the ELCA plan.

The retirement plan is a 403(b)9 plan. Forty mutual funds have been chosen for the plan. The plan is written to enable retirement fund distributions for clergy to be designated as housing allowance for tax purposes in retirement.

Most pastors may transfer their retirement funds from the ELCA plan to the NALC plan after Jan. 1.

Please contact Hahn Financial Group with questions or for more information at 1-800-516-4246 or [lutheranbenefits@hahnfinancialgroup.com](mailto:lutheranbenefits@hahnfinancialgroup.com).

# In Pursuit of the Great Commission

## A new demographic change impacting congregational outreach

By Pastor Don Brandt

Sometimes demographic trends can have a significant impact on congregational outreach. One such trend is the sharp *decrease* in the number of American households currently moving in a given year.

So consider this: Per capita, fewer Americans are changing their addresses than at any time in the last 65 years! That's right. Due to the current economy, we have a lower percentage of Americans moving than at any time since World War II. And while this means fewer of your members are moving away, it also means there are fewer new residents moving to your town or city. Unlike just five years ago, there are now very few American communities experiencing significant population growth.

What are the implications of this when it comes to your congregation's evangelistic outreach? This means an overwhelming percentage of your community residents have lived at their current address for an extended period of time. And that means they are that much less likely to be looking ("shopping?") for a new church.

Considering this new demographic reality, congregations must now, more than ever, focus on **friendship evangelism**. In other words, ministry programs — in and of themselves — are less likely to attract long-time community residents. It's time to get "back to the basics" when it comes to evangelism. Now, more than ever, we need to motivate our members to invite their friends and acquaintances. And with Lutherans this is no small challenge!

So what kind of ministry priorities will increase the odds your members will invite someone they know to "check out" your church?

**1. Sunday-morning worship hospitality is key.** Your members must be reasonably confident that if they invite (and bring) a friend to worship he or she will be warmly received by your members. So

everything you can do to create a hospitable environment on Sunday morning increases the odds your people will be intentional about inviting their friends to attend.

**2. Sunday-morning worship content also needs to be visitor-friendly.** You must do everything possible to insure a quality worship experience. This includes relevant sermon messages, participatory (and quality) music, and a worship liturgy that is not overly complex.

**3. Congregational events that are planned with visitors in mind.** Let's face it: Many unchurched people will never worship with us unless they have first had a positive experience at one of our congregational events. This being the case, more of our events should be planned with this question in mind: "Is this the kind of event our members would be comfortable bringing a friend to?" Once you've planned that kind of event, announce on Sunday mornings that visitors will be expected, that they *will* have a positive experience, and that members should definitely bring friends! And don't forget that your community-service activities are also ideal opportunities for members to invite friends. (One sample idea: What about marriage classes and/or retreats? Many unchurched couples recognize their need for marriage enrichment and renewal. They might respond favorably to an invitation from one of your couples.)

**4. Consider congregational events for families with children.** These are especially effective in motivating members to invite unchurched friends. Nesting-stage parents (married and single) have a special bond with friends in the same stage of life. As a result, your nesting-stage members are ideal ambassadors for your congregation. They are often willing to extend an invitation to their friends who are raising children. (Another sample idea: For mid-sized and larger congregations, why not offer an extra Christmas Eve service specifically for children and their parents? Make sure every element of this service is child-friendly. Advertise this to the

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# We Call upon the Name of the Lord

By Pastor Michael Tavella

In the *Brief Order for Confession and Forgiveness*, the pastor declares the Invocation, “In the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.” Invocation is a word which means “to call upon.”

As we call on the Lord, we are to remember our Baptism, perhaps making the sign of the cross, as the rubric in the *Lutheran Book of Worship* suggests. (A rubric is an instruction or rule about conducting divine worship, usually printed in red, hence the Latin-derived word, rubric, which means red).

Luther taught that Baptism has meaning in the everyday life of the Christian in the daily need for repentance and the forgiveness of sin. This teaching is expressed in *The Small Catechism* in Part IV under *The Sacrament of Holy Baptism*.

Repentance and forgiveness represent the work of the Word of God, rightly divided between Law and Gospel. The Law drives us to repentance; the Gospel declares the forgiveness of sins received by faith.

Though an order for confession and forgiveness is not a required usage, it is seldom omitted in Lutheran practice. The *Brief Order* is meant to be used before the hymn or psalm that begins the Eucharistic liturgy. Among Lutherans, there exists a strong sense of the need to confess our sins and receive the word of forgiveness before continuing our public worship of the holy God. We are to grieve because of our sin, but we also rejoice at the forgiveness we receive.

The only true God is the Lord God — Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. We who worship Him acknowledge His Lordship and, in fidelity to His Word, call Him by the Name that He has revealed to us.

To address God with titles and names alien to His nature and the Biblical witness is to call on a god other than the true God. In the Old Testament, the inspired writers witness to the Triune God. (See St. Augustine’s *The Trinity*). In the New Testament — which testifies to the coming of the Son of God, Jesus Christ — the Holy Trinity is explicitly named.

When we call on the Name of God we are identifying the God whom we worship and are distinguishing Him from all false gods and idols. He is the one who created the world and redeems and sanctifies His chosen people. The Lord hears those who call on Him, and He will grant His grace to them.

In the *Lutheran Book of Worship*, the Invocation is followed by one of the most beautiful collects ever written, known as “The Collect of Purity.” It was used in the Sarum Rite, Diocese of Salisbury, England, and is found in the *Book of Common Prayer* as an opening prayer to be recited by the celebrant. In the *Lutheran Book of Worship*, it has been placed appropriately in the confessional service. The prayer is in classic collect form: an address to God, a referral to God’s nature or deeds, a petition, and a result clause followed by the termination.

Before we confess our sins, we acknowledge that our hearts, desires and secrets are all known to God. We ask that, by the Holy Spirit, the thoughts of our hearts may be cleansed so that we may perfectly love God and worthily praise His holy name. We begin the confessional service in God’s Name and ask immediately afterward in the collect that, by His action, we may worthily magnify it.

We must recognize our sin — as expressed in the words taken from 1 John 1: 8-9 — and are to remember that God will most assuredly forgive sins and cleanse us from unrighteousness. The theme of cleansing mentioned in the Collect is taken up in the citation from 1 John.

After a period of silent self-examination, we confess our sins. We acknowledge that we are sinners, whom only God can free.

In his writings, Luther emphasized the idea that sin remains in the person after Baptism. The whole Christian life is a struggle between the old self and the new self. Perfection cannot be achieved in this life but must await the life to come. Our sin infects our thoughts, words, and deeds. We have sinned in both the commission of what we ought not to

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have done and the omission of what we ought to have done.

The prayer of confession in LBW paraphrases Jesus' Summary of the Law. We have sinned against God and neighbor both of whom we are to love. We ask God that our sins may be forgiven for the sake of Jesus Christ who died a sacrificial death for us, so that we may walk in His ways (a Biblical phrase, e.g. 1 Kings 3:14), to the glory of His holy Name.

Entrusted with the Office of the Keys, the pastor declares the forgiveness of sins in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. The confessional service begins in the Name of the Holy Trinity and ends in the same Name.

LBW provides an alternate absolution, stating that those who believe in Christ are children of God and receive the Holy Spirit.

While it is not necessary to include a service of confession of sin and forgiveness every Sunday, it is a salutary practice and should be used on a regular, if not weekly, basis. The rubrics in LBW also suggest prayers of confession at the time of The Prayers, if the *Brief Order* is not used.

Lutherans do not visit the confessional in large numbers nor is it common parish practice to hold regular penitential services at times other than Sunday morning. We also do not often, if ever, use a procedure of excommunication and reconciliation for person's committing egregious public sins as we find in the practice of the Church in the patristic period, though lip service is given to such practice in our constitutions.

On the Queen of Feasts, Easter Sunday, known properly as "The Resurrection of our Lord," the confession could certainly be omitted after the penitential discipline of Holy Week. At other great festivals of the Church (e.g. Christmas and Pentecost), the confession could also be omitted.

As has been the practice of the Lutheran church in previous service books, it is important that we continue to include in future worship resources a brief order for confession and forgiveness for use

before the celebration of the Sacrament. We need to shun orders of confession that reflect the pop theology and psychology that is all too prevalent in the contemporary church. The use in public worship of any order for confession outside of those prescribed by the church should be preceded by a close examination of its theology. Any order that de-emphasizes the gravity of sin, both original and actual, has no place in the worship of the church. Well-composed confessional services tell of both the depth of our sin and the greatness of God's mercy toward those who repent.

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## **In Pursuit of the Great Commission**

### ***Continued from Page 11***

community and you will probably have Christmas Eve worshipers who otherwise would not be worshiping at your church.)

**5. Regularly remind your members to look for opportunities to invite their friends to either worship or a specific congregational activity.** This emphasis needs to become a part of your congregation's DNA. Lutherans, in particular, need to be reminded of the importance of *friendship evangelism*.

While some of your members probably have the gift for personal evangelism, the majority need the collective witness of your congregation to inspire and motivate them as ambassadors for Christ. They might feel ill-equipped to verbally witness to their friends, but they can be motivated to extend an invitation to visit your church or participate in a well-planned congregational activity.

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# The Nativity of Our Lord

By Pastor Russell E. Saltzman

*The Nativity of Our Lord - St. Luke 2:1-20*

There was no room for Him in the inn the night He was born into this, His world. He was born of His mother, with Joseph nearby, out there in the stable with the animals.

And when His birth was complete, there wasn't much else to be done, and there probably wasn't anybody to tell. Who'd care, anyway? Nobody paid any attention, busy with other things more worthy of their time and energy. Nobody noticed, of course, because — well, really — there was nothing to notice.

Mary and Joseph were Galilean peasants. Joseph made that trip for the census because he was too poor to hire anyone else to make it for him. Besides, who celebrates or notices or marks the birth of yet another peasant? Have you ever even once in your life heard a prayer of thanks for the children born in Ethiopia, or at a United Nations refugee camp? When William and Kate over in Great Britain have their first child, just wait. That kid's picture will be all over the place.

But the children of peasants are always born into silence. So, no, there were no flags, no parades, no military bands, no 21-gun salutes, no cheery demonstrations, fireworks, no nothing. There was not even a baby-cot. And when the midwife was done, if Mary was lucky enough to have a midwife, she went home and probably thought nothing more about it.

It remained so silent that God in heaven Himself decided to break that silence and let some few people know what had happened.

So He sent an angel to the people who were nearest to the birth. He sent first one angel, and then a whole crowd of angels, to the shepherds.

To the shepherds? Probably not the wisest choice God could have made.



We have beautiful songs about those shepherds abiding in their fields by night, and the angels who visited them, songs filled with sentiment and warmth. We've even invented a whole legendary mythology about them. Shepherds are humble and kind; real sweethearts, gentle guys tending sheep as they do; and that littlest shepherd does a neat drum, doesn't he.

The reality is different. What is real is always different. These shepherds — in fact most shepherds back in first century Palestine — were regarded as ruffians. And if their reputation was anything like reality, they probably were. Most people thought of shepherds the way we thought of the Teamsters Union in the 1970s. First century shepherds, in a description from the time, were "unpleasant and inglorious" (*Philo cited by Jeremias, Jerusalem*).

According to rabbinic evaluation, they belonged to the outcasts of society, untrustworthy loners, unsettled, essentially homeless. They were classed as tax collectors and other low sinners, and along with pickpockets and women, they were forbidden to be witnesses or give testimony in Jewish courts. These are the hired shepherds Jesus would later speak about, the ones who would abandon the flock, when they weren't thieving the fold snatching a lamb or two.

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But the angels, we are told, went to them. Angels went to a Teamsters convention — went to shepherds who had no place in this world to call their home.

God's angels went to them because God sent them. How about that? God found somebody poorer than peasants and sent them angels to sing Christ's birth. The silence of His birth was broken by the glory of God shining on homeless nobodies.

Jesus came as a stranger, uncelebrated and unremarked, and he was greeted only by other strangers, strangers who could recognize in themselves a restless need only Christ could fulfill.

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---

Isn't each of us to some degree a stranger in this world too? Alone? Adrift?

No? You don't think so?

Then tell me:

Do you feel completely at home with your relationships?

Do you feel at home when you read *Time* or *Newsweek* or watch that *Eyewitness News* segment about another murder, another holiday traffic death?

Do you feel at home when you look around and see that guy at the on-ramp with his sign, "Will work for food"?

Do you feel at home, even at home?

Don't we each greet this world with wariness; a caution, a fear?

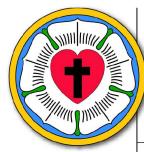
I was just thinking. This is an even lonelier world for me this year. People I've known since childhood have died. The home my father built in 1942, the house where I grew up, is empty. Oh, the things are still there, all the things for awhile yet, but the people who lived with those things and in a way gave them life, they are gone. The home I could always go back to, forever gone.

That's why angels went to shepherds, why they went to people like them — people who turn out in large degree to be people like us; people feeling uneasy and uncertain and a little adrift and a little lost.

Maybe that's why we all — shepherds, you, and me — feel more at home with Him than with anyone anywhere else?

*Pastor Russell E. Saltzman wrote this reflection for Christmas Day for the Christian Leadership Center, an ecumenical initiative of the University of Mary in Bismarck, N.D. Pastor Saltzman wrote the lectionary homiletical reflections for the Third and Fourth Sundays of Advent, Christmas Eve and Christmas Day. The center offers the homiletical reflections and other tools for preachers at its website — [www.clcumary.com..](http://www.clcumary.com..) You may read Pastor Saltzman's other reflections online.*

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