

Relief Fund to help Lutherans in Ethiopia experiencing persecution

A relief fund has been established to help Christians in western and southwestern Ethiopia who have recently experienced persecution by Islamic radicals. The Ethiopian Church Relief Fund is a joint effort by Lutheran CORE, Lutheran Congregations in Mission for Christ, and the North American Lutheran Church.

The Rev. Dr. Wakseyoum Idossa, President of the Ethiopian Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus (the Lutheran church in Ethiopia), has reported that 57 churches and 45 individual homes have been destroyed. More than 3,600 people have been displaced from their homes and some have been badly beaten and killed.

The Rev. Dr. Gemechis D. Buba, Missions Director for the NALC and a native of Ethiopia, reported that these brutal acts are not the first of their kind. Three years ago Muslim fundamentalists burned down several churches, killed evangelists, pastors and lay leaders. They are now repeating the same attacks. Today thousands have lost their homes, churches, family members and



The burned remains of one of the Mekane Yesus churches attacked during violence against churches in Ethiopia. (Photos courtesy of International Christian Concern - www.persecution.org)

their rights to safely worship and conduct their ministries.

Persecution is not new to Lutherans in Ethiopia. "However, every time it happens it opens up old wounds and breaks the hearts of many. In the middle of all this our brothers and sisters

are walking into this holy Lenten season not with ashes on their forehead but carrying the cross of Christ and confessing their faith in the words of Psalm 23:1, 'The Lord is my shepherd!'" Dr. Buba said.

Continued on Page 2

Ethiopian Church Relief Fund

Continued from Page 1

“The violence and destruction against churches of the Mekane Yesus Church and individual Christians have largely subsided. However, the task for rebuilding and relief is beginning,” said NALC Bishop Paull Spring. “The Mekane Yesus Church is providing emergency assistance — food, blankets, and other necessities — for those who have experienced loss. Still ahead is the reconstruction of churches that have been destroyed.

“The North American Lutheran Church has developed a close relationship with the Mekane Yesus Church,” Bishop Spring said. “Individuals and congregations of the NALC are urged to gather funds to assist our brothers and sisters in Ethiopia.”

“Our sisters and brothers in Christ in Ethiopia witnessed to our Lord at great cost for many years under the former Communist government, and now experience suffering from radical Muslims. Their bold witness to our Lord no matter the cost should inspire us in the West to be bolder in our witness. The very least we can do is to help the Ethiopians rebuild their churches and homes,” said Pastor Mark Chavez, director of Lutheran CORE.

“After having just been in Ethiopia with these brothers and sisters, seeing their faith, their



These fragments from a Bible survived violence that destroyed a church in Nada, Ethiopia.

courage and their obvious passion for the Gospel, it is overwhelming to consider what they have now had to experience in this persecution. But even in this, they see the Lord at work,” said Pastor Mark Vander Tuig, LCMC Service Coordinator.

“A seminary professor from Addis Ababa said the blood of the martyrs is the seed of evangelism. I pray that we too might someday have that kind of faith. I am hopeful that we can show our support for these believers by helping them to rebuild their churches and their homes,” Vander Tuig said.

Please send gifts to Ethiopian Church Relief Fund; 2299 Palmer Drive, Suite 220; New Brighton, MN 55112. Please make checks payable to Ethiopian Church Relief Fund. All funds received will be forwarded to the Ethiopian Evangelical Church Mekane

Yesus. You may also give online at www.thenalc.org.

“We are reminded by the apostle that it has been granted to us on behalf of Christ not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for him, since we are going through the same struggle we see (Philippians 1:29-30). I would like to thank God for God’s protection and the grace and courage that God is giving his chosen people to suffer for the sake of Christ! There is hope for them and for all of us. Christ is alive and will always remain Emmanuel for us in times of our joys and difficulties,” EECMY President Idossa said.

“We highly appreciate your concerns and prayers in such a difficult situation. It is our sincere hope that you will continue to pray and accompany us. May the almighty God bless you all!” he concluded.

How can we keep the NALC the NALC?

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

As I and others go about the church, making presentations on the life and mission of the North American Lutheran Church, one question is almost invariably asked of us: What is to prevent the North American Lutheran Church from reverting to what the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America is?

In other words, How can we keep the North American Lutheran Church the North American Lutheran Church? It's a good question, and it comes from people who are deeply anxious about the future, from people who are still hurting from what they have gone through, and who desperately want us to get it "right" this time.

Professor Carl Braaten has reminded us on numerous occasions that there is no perfect church this side of eternity. But my hope is that there are some things in place that ought to give us confidence in the North American Lutheran Church.

We can, for one thing, point to the Confession of Faith, Article II of our constitution; to Article III, on the nature of the church; and to the Common Confession, which appears at the end of the constitution. These documents are foundational for us as Lutheran Christians. Taken together, they affirm a robust confession of the Bible as the Word of God and a thoroughly orthodox understanding of the Lutheran witness in the



Bishop Paull E. Spring

Confessions. Our Confession of Faith is solidly grounded in Christ as the one Savior for all people.

There are other safeguards for us in the North American Lutheran Church.

We have a Commission on Theology and Doctrine in place in our structure. This is a group of distinguished Lutheran theologians, lay people, and pastors who themselves are highly committed to the orthodoxy of our faith. One of the responsibilities for this commission is to review statements and other actions of our church as to their orthodoxy and Biblical content. Such a Commission may be something new for many of us, but it is one way to be assured that the North

American Lutheran Church remains the NALC.

Another is the congregational ratification process. On certain issues our congregations are invited to ratify decisions of the annual Convocation. Congregational ratification is specifically required for amendments to the constitution and for the adoption of major theological statements. We want to preserve the competence of the Convocation to speak on behalf of the whole church. At the same time, we want to be open to the wisdom and insights of our congregations. I believe that the congregational ratification process is a way we can secure the consent of the whole church on important and substantive matters. We trust the congregations as we trust the Convocation, as together we seek God's wisdom in our decision-making.

There is the elections process, especially the process for calling a bishop and electing persons for the Executive Council. In our constitution we have a procedure for congregational nominations for bishop and for members of the Executive Council. At the Convocation the four highest nominees will be given the opportunity to address the gathering as a part of the calling process. These addresses will give us the chance to listen carefully as the candidates articulate a faith that is Biblically-based and

Continued on Page 3

NALC surpasses 175 congregations

More than 175 congregations have already voted to join the North American Lutheran Church. The NALC has been experiencing rapid growth since it was constituted on Aug. 27, 2010.

The NALC Executive Council has formally received 155 congregations during the NALC's first seven months of existence.

More than 20 additional congregations have passed resolutions indicating their intention to join the NALC upon completion of their departure from their current church body.

Model Constitution for NALC Congregations is available

A Model Constitution for NALC congregations has been prepared to assist congregations in updating their existing constitutions.

Congregations of the NALC are not required to adopt any particular constitution. Rather, this model is offered as a resource for those who choose to use it.

NALC congregations must accept the Confession of Faith and constitution of the NALC and should note that in their constitutions.

The Model Constitution for Congregations provides a template upon which a constitution for a congregation may be adopted.

"Governing Documents for NALC Congregations" is a companion document to the NALC Model Constitution for Congregations. This document provides an overview of the questions that may be asked as congregations consider their governing documents.

The documents are available under "resources" at www.thenalc.org.

Many more congregations are expected to vote to join the church body in the coming months.

Currently, the states with the most NALC congregations are North Carolina, Ohio and Texas with 16 congregations each. Pennsylvania has 14 congregations, and Iowa has 12.

A map and listing of NALC congregations is online at www.thenalc.org. It is updated as new congregations are received by the NALC Executive Council. Congregations that have been received by the Executive Council are listed on pages 13-15.

Bishop Spring

Continued from Page 3

confessionally-sound. It is the responsibility of the delegates to the Convocation to listen wisely and reverently, as they elect and call persons to leadership in our church.

There is the candidacy process by which the Candidacy Committee, on behalf of the church, takes action on those who are seeking ordination. I have just returned from a meeting of this committee. Without reservation we gave our approval to eight candidates for ordained ministry in our church. What a thrill it was to hear these pastors-to-be as they professed their faith in the authority of the Bible as God's Word and their loyalty to the Lutheran Confessions. I am confident that the candidacy process will go a long way toward keeping us who we are as the North American Lutheran Church.

To be sure, we have no guarantees. Procedures and policies can go only so far. But I believe — and even more, I pray — that God's Spirit will sustain us in our still new church; that He will support us in our mission; and that his presence will keep us faithful in our confession of His Holy Name.

In Christ,

Paull E. Spring, Bishop

Congregational mission and discipleship event in Indiana to feature Foss and Buba

“Come, Follow Me” is the theme of a congregational mission and discipleship event set for May 13-14 at St. John’s Lutheran Church in Fort Wayne, Ind.

The event — the second of seven planned by the Congregational Life and Pastoral Support Working Group for Lutheran CORE and the North American Lutheran Church — will feature the Rev. Dr. Michael W. Foss, and the Rev. Dr. Gemechis Desta Buba.

“The goal of this event is to transform your congregation from a membership basis to a discipleship basis so that you might more effectively pursue the Great Commission given by Jesus Christ,” the conference brochure explains.

Pastor Foss, pastor of St. Mark Lutheran Church in West Des Moines, Iowa, is a gifted teacher, preacher, and trainer. He is the author of several books including *Power Surge; A Servant’s Manual; Real Faith for Real Life; From Members to Disciples; and The Disciple’s Joy.*

Dr. Buba, Missions Director for the NALC, has served as a mission developer, seminary professor, senior pastor, bishop’s assistant, and Director of African National Ministries for the ELCA. He has participated in multiple international ministries through revivals, leadership development and evangelical mission events.

There will be four presentations by Pastor Foss: “Leading Transformational Ministries: Discipleship;” “Mission Driven - Vision Led;” “The Joy of Discipleship;” and “Strategies for Growing Deeper.”

Dr. Buba will address the assembly twice on the theme, “Christian Ministry at Cross Roads: “Go; But Wait!”

Cost for the workshop, which includes lunch on Saturday, is \$25 per person with a maximum of \$100 per congregation regardless of how many people register from that congregation.

More information is available at www.thenalc.org.

Carolinas Deanery Convocation is June 3-4

The NALC Carolinas Deanery will hold its first Convocation June 3-4 at New Jerusalem Lutheran Church in Hickory, N.C.

The Carolinas Deanery — which will include both North Carolina and South Carolina — is the first NALC deanery to formally organize.

The number of NALC congregations in North Carolina has been growing very quickly. The state already has 16 NALC congregations — the largest number of any single state — with additional churches in the process of joining.

The Convocation will elect a Dean and an Executive Council consisting of six members — three lay and three clergy. It will also adopt a budget and a constitution. Each congregation may

send at least one lay delegate. Additional lay delegates are allocated to larger congregations based on their total membership. All NALC pastors — both active and retired — may vote.

Pastor John Bradosky, NALC General Secretary, will be the keynote speaker for the Convocation. The Rev. Dr. J. Larry Yoder of Lenoir-Rhyne University in Hickory, N.C., will preach for the opening worship service and will provide a theological presentation for the Convocation.

Pastor Steven King of Sola Publishing will be present at the Convocation and will lead a workshop introducing Sola’s educational materials.

More information on the Convocation is available at www.thenalc.org.

Mission planters training event is May 5-6

The North American Lutheran Church will host a Mission Planters Training Event May 5-6 at the NALC offices at Upper Arlington Lutheran Church in Hilliard, Ohio. The event is for leaders and groups in the process of planting and growing mission churches.

The Rev. Dr. Gemechis Desta Buba, NALC Missions Director, will present the NALC's mission plan and discuss vital signs of healthy mission congregations. A tracking system for missional health and growth will be introduced.

Pastor John Bradosky, NALC General Secretary, will lead presentations on "Discipleship and Developing Missional Leaders in a Mission Congregation" and "Mission Support and Creating a Culture of Stewardship."

Professor James Nestingen will address the "Biblical, Theological and Confessional Basis of Missions."

There will also be addresses by NALC Bishop Paul Spring and Pastor Mark Chavez, director of Lutheran CORE. The Rev. Dr. Ron Warren, NALC provisional dean for Ohio and retired bishop of the ELCA's Southeastern Synod, will provide a devotional emphasis on the Great Commission.

Registration fee is \$20 per person. Financial assistance may be available for those who need it.

For more information, contact NALC Missions Director Pastor Gemechis Buba, at 614-777-5709 or gbuba@thenalc.org.

Pennsylvania conference to address debate on relevance of Scripture

At a time when the Bible has become the center of contentious debate among Christians in several of the major denominations in this country, dividing both congregations and entire denominations, many Christians are perplexed about what to believe. While all Christians believe that the Bible is, in some sense, God's Word, they often disagree over how much weight the Bible should carry when addressing some contemporary issues. How relevant is the Bible today?

To help clarify the issues and clear the confusion, the West Penn Lutheran CORE Fellowship is sponsoring a theological conference on May 22 featuring three acclaimed theologians. Though their perspectives differ, each theologian will tackle the issue of why it is important for today's Christians to listen and discern what the Bible says. Their viewpoints on how Christians understand the authority of the Bible in the present day may not end the debate, but it will help all Christians appreciate why this debate is so important for the Church.

The conference — "*God's Word, Three Views, One Bible*" — will feature Dr. Walter Sundberg, Luther Seminary, St. Paul, Minn.; Dr. David Scaer, Concordia Seminary, Ft. Wayne, Ind., and Dr. Rodney Whitacre, Trinity Episcopal School for Ministry, Pittsburgh, Pa.

The conference, to be held at Zion Lutheran Church of Pittsburgh (Brentwood), is open to all interested people. It is set for 3-8 p.m. A dinner will be served during the break. The cost is \$25 per person. Students are \$15. You may register by sending a check payable to West Penn Lutheran CORE Fellowship to: Zion Lutheran Church, 4301 Brownsville Road, Pittsburgh, PA 15236 or by e-mail to zlcbrrentwood@juno.com

The West Penn Lutheran CORE Fellowship is a chapter of Lutheran CORE. Lutheran CORE was formed in order to connect Lutheran Christians through North America in the common work of mission and ministry for the sake of the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Nominations requested for NALC leaders

Congregations of the North American Lutheran Church are encouraged to nominate individuals to serve as leaders for the church body.

The 2011 NALC Convocation Aug. 11-12 at Upper Arlington Lutheran Church's Mill Run campus in Hilliard, Ohio, will elect a new bishop to serve a four-year term. NALC Bishop Paull Spring has said that he will not be available for reelection.

NALC congregations may nominate candidates for bishop and for the Executive Council. The Nominating Committee is also seeking the names of individuals to serve on the Court of Adjudication and the 2012 Nominating Committee.

Each NALC congregation was sent a letter explaining the nominating process. Information is also available at www.thenalc.org.

Lutheran CORE's 2010 Convocation elected provisional leaders to guide the NALC through its first year and to enable the congregations that join the NALC to elect their own leaders in 2011.

Elections for all NALC positions will take place at the 2011 NALC Convocation. Executive Council and Court of Adjudication members will be elected to staggered terms.

All nominees must be members of a NALC congregation at the time of the Convocation. All ordained nominees must be received as NALC pastors by the date of the Convocation.

Pastor Carl Haynes of Christiana Lutheran Church near Salisbury, N.C., is chair of the Nominating Committee. He can be reached at 704-279-4655 or nominations@thenalc.org.

'Salvation Today' is theme for the 2011 Lutheran CORE theological conference

"Salvation Today" is the theme of the Lutheran CORE theological conference Aug. 10-11.

The annual theological conference is held in conjunction with the convocations of Lutheran CORE and the North American Lutheran Church.

The Lutheran CORE Convocation will be Aug. 9. The Convocation of the North American Lutheran Church will be Aug. 11-12. The convocations and theological conference will be held at Upper Arlington Lutheran Church's Mill Run campus in Hilliard, Ohio.

"To proclaim the good news of Christ's salvation to all the nations is the chief reason for the church's being. . . . Yet, some Christians and churches act as though we have come to the end of the missionary era," conference organizers explained.

Presentations for the theological conference include:

The Uniqueness and Universality of Jesus Christ
Professor Gerald McDermott
Roanoke College - Salem, Va.

Calling Lutherans Back to the Evangelistic Task
President Wakseyoum Idossa
Ethiopian Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus

Engaging in Politics, Yes; Politicizing the Gospel, No!
Professor Robert Benne
Roanoke College - Salem, Va.

The Lutheran Legacy in the Worldwide Church
The Rev. Dr. Sarah Hinlicky Wilson
Institute for Ecumenical Research - Strasbourg

Orthodoxy At Stake: A Symposium
Anglican, Lutheran and Reformed Perspectives
Anglican - The Rt. Rev. Bishop Ray Sutton
Reformed - The Rev. Dr. Joseph Small
Lutheran - The Rev. Dr. James Nestingen

St. Timothy's Lutheran Church

San Jose, California

If you were to walk onto the campus of St. Timothy's Lutheran Church and School at almost any time throughout the week, you would find it to be an alive, vibrant, and welcoming community of faith.

With an active congregation, a Christ-centered school, and a variety of classes and ministries sharing the same campus, there is hardly a time when something is not happening to build and to grow the body of Christ in this place.

Located on the south end of the greater San Francisco Bay area, in what is known as Silicon Valley, St. Timothy's continues to be one of the strongest Lutheran congregations in northern California.



Through the offering of a variety of Bible classes, opportunities to serve, and ministries to support, St. Timothy's takes seriously its calling to be the body of Christ.

Worship plays a central and unifying role in the shared life of the congregation, with two traditional and two contemporary services offered Sunday morning through Sunday evening.

In a similar way, Adult Education is given a high priority in congregational life. Regular classes are offered on Sunday mornings and evenings as well as throughout the week, including Bible studies, book studies, marriage and parenting classes, the Church and its theology, and classes in how to share one's faith.



Established as a mission start in 1962, it is now a congregation of more than 1,200 members, served by three pastors, Dan Selbo and Jim and Judy Bangsund, and 10 full and part-time staff members.

At the heart of St. Timothy's is a desire to witness to the saving grace of Jesus Christ, to lead people to faith, and to engage them in a supportive church family. Situated in one of the world's most diverse and challenging mission fields, with people from all over the world coming to work in the high tech industries, St. Timothy's has a unique opportunity to extend its international witness by reaching the people who reside in the local communities.





Continued from Page 7

Among the strengths of this congregation is its commitment to ministry among its children and youth. With full-time staff working in each area, St. Timothy's has a strong Sunday school, a reputation for an outstanding Vacation Bible School, and a solid and growing Junior and Senior High ministry. St. Timothy's also provides support for parents through Mothers of Preschoolers (MOPS), MomsNEXT (1st through 12th grade moms), and Growing Christian Fathers.

Ministry and mission are not lost in the midst of the many activities taking place. St. Timothy's has a strong Stephen Ministry program, an active ministry for its seniors, and has made supportive connections with a variety of ministries that serve the community.

Along with reaching out to the local community, St. Timothy's also supports missionaries and mission efforts in India, Eastern Europe, Mexico, South Africa, and China.

In 1979, the congregation made a commitment to Christian education and to extending its outreach into the community by establishing St. Timothy's



Lutheran School. Sharing the same campus, the school currently serves 140 children, ranging in age from preschool through elementary students.

In its more than 30 years of history, the school has provided a solid Christian and academic foundation for thousands of children and families who have chosen to make this school their own.



If you are ever in the San Jose area, we would love to have you come and join us in worship. We also look forward to meeting each of you, since we have recently become members of the North American Lutheran Church. Until then, if you would like to know more about us and what we have to offer, please visit our website at www.stlcsj.org. We think you will like what you find!



This article is part of a series of profiles of NALC congregations. All NALC congregations are encouraged to send a profile introducing their congregation to others in the NALC. Please share whatever you'd like others to know about your congregation, your area, and especially your mission. Send the article and a few photos to news@thenalc.

Haiti - One Year Later

Lutheran World Relief reports on efforts since 2010 earthquake

A year after the devastating 7.0 magnitude earthquake hit Haiti, Lutheran World Relief continues its long-term efforts to assist earthquake-affected communities.

“Thanks to LWR’s generous supporters, LWR has raised more than \$7 million for Haiti’s long-term recovery,” said Pastor John Nunes, LWR president. “Because of this support, LWR has committed to working in Haiti for at least five years to help communities recover and move forward,” he said.

In the immediate aftermath of the earthquake, LWR responded to critical needs in partnership with the ACT (Action by Churches Together) Alliance and other local partners, providing \$1.1 million for food, water and shelter in and around Port-au-Prince and other heavily affected areas. LWR also responded by sending quilts and kits to Haiti. Quilts and kits assembled and donated by congregations across the United States are a hallmark of LWR’s ministry. As of December 2010, LWR had shipped a total of 77,585 health kits, 35,700 school kits, and 25,545 quilts, 17,500 tarps and 1,500 layettes to Haiti.

Long-term recovery in Haiti has been challenging, with the migration of approximately 600,000 people from the capital city to rural communities and with additional crises, like the recent cholera outbreak and Hurricane Tomas. LWR also supported the ACT response to Hurricane Tomas and continues to respond to the cholera outbreak. With expertise and experience in rural development, and a 15-year history working in rural Haiti, LWR is focusing its long-term rehabilitation efforts on addressing the endemic poverty that makes communities more vulnerable to the impact of disasters.

LWR is working with two local partners, World Neighbors and Partnership for Local Development (PLD), to help strengthen the rural communities that took in approximately 600,000 people who fled the capital city of Port-au-Prince after the earthquake.

“These are communities that were already impoverished. Their resources were already very limited,” said LWR’s Carolyn Barker-Villena. “Of course they were willing to take people in and do what they could to help, but it puts a strain on



People stand in line to fill containers at a water distribution projected supported by LWR at a tent encampment in Port-au-Prince, Haiti, Feb. 25, 2010. (Photo by Jonathan Ernst for Lutheran World Relief)

resources. These rural areas had needs before the quake, and those needs are even more prominent now. That’s what LWR is working to address.”

LWR and partners have provided nutrition, health and hygiene training to people, including internally displaced persons, and worked to ensure adequate year-round food supply. Through cash-for-work programs, LWR and partners are helping people earn income by repairing roads, improving farms and building latrines and community water filters. LWR also helped open 12 community stores in remote areas of Haiti to provide subsidized basic foods, seeds and other essential supplies to farmers.

In October, after the outbreak of cholera, a potentially fatal intestinal infection, LWR responded by partnering with IMA World Health to distribute medical supplies to hospitals and local health centers, water filters to schools, and oral rehydration salts, soap, and water treatment tablets to vulnerable populations.

Haiti’s recovery will take time, and LWR is committed to walking with the people of Haiti as they rebuild their lives and pave their path for future. “Looking to the future, LWR seeks to work with partners to invest in programs that move beyond disaster relief to tackle the root causes of poverty and help communities become stronger than they were before,” Pastor Nunes said.

LWR responds to earthquake in Japan

Lutheran World Relief is responding to the devastation in Japan following the March 11 earthquake and tsunami through the Lutheran churches in Japan and through Church World Service.

Church World Service, a LWR partner relief organization, is providing emergency relief to some 25,000 people now living at 100 evacuation sites in northeastern Japan, focusing on areas where basic needs of food, water, sanitation, electricity and fuel are not being met.

In the earliest stages of any disaster, the most effective way to help is with cash gifts so that responders can meet immediate and urgent needs.



Lutheran World Relief
SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT. LASTING PROMISE.

LWR is also monitoring project areas in the Asia region, especially in Indonesia and the Philippines, which might be affected by further emergencies or nuclear-related disasters.

Lutheran World Relief, an international nonprofit organization, works to end poverty and injustice by empowering some of the world's most impoverished communities to help themselves.

With partners in 35 countries, LWR seeks to promote sustainable development with

justice and dignity by helping communities bring about change for healthy, safe and secure lives; engage in Fair Trade; promote peace and reconciliation; and respond to emergencies.

LWR is headquartered in Baltimore, Md. and has worked in international development and relief since 1945.

Additional information on LWR is available online at www.lwr.org.

Gifts to support LWR's work in Japan or in other parts of the world may be given online or sent to:

Lutheran World Relief
P.O. Box 17061
Baltimore, MD 21298-9832

Personal Care Kits are new LWR parish project

You can help Lutheran World Relief respond to the next disaster by preparing Personal Care Kits.

When natural disaster strikes or political conflict flares, families often have little chance to gather their belongings before fleeing the danger. They arrive in a refugee camp or other place of safety scared, vulnerable and dirty from the travel.

The simple items included in a Personal Care Kit allow them to wash away the dirt and sweat, with the fresh scent of soap and the softness of a towel as reminders of someone's care and concern for them in their plight.

Personal Care Kits are the newest LWR parish project. The new project replaces the LWR's health kit project. The change comes as a result of study as to the best way to meet the immediate needs of those in crisis. LWR will continue to receive the old Health Kits for the next year or so.

These items are included in each Personal Care Kit:

- ! One bath-size towel (dark color recommended).
- ! Two bath-size bars (4 to 5 oz.) of soap.
- ! One adult-size toothbrush.
- ! One sturdy comb.
- ! One metal nail clippers.

Other LWR Kit projects include School Kits, Baby Care Kits, and Fabric Kits. You can learn more about how to prepare Personal Care Kits and other LWR parish projects and where to send them at www.lwr.org. LWR is expecting a 15 percent increase in the need for quilts and kits this year.

In its 2010 fiscal year, LWR sent \$11.8 million worth of quilts and kits to 838,302 people in 24 countries. That included 319,610 quilts, 213,350 school kits, 174,975 health kits, 24,375 sewing kits, 85,100 layettes, and 38,570 pounds of soap.

In Pursuit of the Great Commission

By Pastor Don Brandt

I recently read a fascinating article in *Leadership Journal*. The writer, Jay Childs, is an evangelical pastor at a large congregation in Midland, Mich. In this article he shared his frustrations due to the fact that no matter what he tried, he seemed incapable of getting his congregation to grow numerically. The church had reached a plateau in size; and this after many years of sustained growth under Pastor Child's leadership. New people were still being reached, but only enough to make up for the people they were losing.

This pastor then went on to acknowledge that not every church can expect to grow — at least numerically — in every “season” of its congregational life. I really appreciated this article. It was filled with grace and assurance for pastors who are sometimes too hard on themselves, who make the mistake of assuming they are always at fault when their congregation has either reached a plateau in size or is in decline.

One of the complaints directed toward the “church growth movement” of the 1980s and 1990s was its seeming emphasis on quantity over quality. And despite all that this movement did contribute in the area of congregational evangelism, this was sometimes a valid criticism.

Something we should all keep in mind regarding the church growth “boom” of the 80s and 90s: This was the period when the largest generation in American history — the Baby Boomers — was in the nesting stage. Fact is, unchurched Americans are never more open to church involvement than when they are raising their children. This demographic reality presented a relatively unique opportunity for church growth.

Well “times have changed,” as they say. Even though Boomer offspring (the “Millennials”) are themselves in the nesting stage, it's not quite the same. Millennials are less likely to marry than their parents. If married, they're less likely to have children. If they have children, they are less likely to have more than one.

One more change: Americans, according to the major 2010 Pew Forum study, were far more likely to identify themselves as agnostic or atheist than in the past. In fact, today's young adults are twice as likely to self-identify as atheist or agnostic than Boomers when they were young adults!

However, if all of this isn't discouraging enough, there are many additional factors which can negatively impact a congregation's growth potential. At least **five ministry challenges** come to mind:

1. Mission context is (not surprisingly) perhaps the single most significant challenge. If your local community is in decline it is extremely difficult for your congregation to grow. Also, with the advent of the Great Recession, there are even fewer American communities that are experiencing rapid population growth.

2. Median age of your congregation's membership. If your membership is noticeably older than the surrounding community, that complicates a whole range of ministries. This includes your ability to have a viable Sunday school and/or a healthy youth ministry program.

3. Congregation's current size. While smaller congregations do offer a kind of intimacy and hospitality not usually characteristic of large churches, this is not always an advantage when it comes to attracting visitors. Visitors — especially unchurched visitors — are more likely to check out a church that, by virtue of its size, probably offers multiple programs and a certain amount of anonymity.

4. Denominational identity. As our increasingly secular culture is now, more than ever, ignorant regarding even the basic teachings of Christianity, the unchurched are unlikely to appreciate (or care about) the doctrinal distinctions of various denominations. One interesting statistic: The number of Americans identifying themselves as “nondenominational Christians” has increased from less than 200,000 in 1990 to over 8 million today.

5. Current American preference for “spirituality” over and against “religion.” I've read of multiple surveys where respondents indicated a very positive response to the word “spirituality,” and a very negative response to the word “religion.” This has to do with both increasing anti-institutionalism (which began, by the way, back when the Boomers were young) and the growing popularity of more customized, non-doctrinaire and self-serving spiritual worldviews.

In the next column we will take a look at practical ways congregations can address these ministry challenges.

NALC Congregations

Alaska

St. Paul Lutheran Church
Kodiak, Alaska

Arizona

St. Peter Lutheran Church
Mesa, Ariz.

California

St. John Lutheran Church
Arroyo Grande, Calif.

St. Timothy's Lutheran Church
San Jose, Calif.

First Lutheran Church
Tulare, Calif.

Colorado

Black Forest Lutheran Church
Colorado Springs, Colo.

St. Luke's Lutheran Church
Colorado Springs, Colo.

Florida

Shepherd of the Hills Lutheran Church
Dade City, Fla.

Oasis Church
Lake Mary, Fla.

Iglesia Evangelica Luterana San Pedro
Miami, Fla.

First Evangelical Lutheran Church
West Palm Beach, Fla.

Abiding Savior Lutheran Church
Winter Haven, Fla.

Georgia

Christ the King Lutheran Church
Evans, Ga.

Prince of Peace Lutheran Church
Fayetteville, Ga.

Word of God Lutheran Church
Peachtree City, Ga.

New Thing Bible Ministry
Stone Mountain, Ga.

Illinois

Christ the King Lutheran Church
DeSoto, Ill.

First Lutheran Church
Kirkland, Ill.

St. Paul Lutheran Church
Metropolis, Ill.

Zion Lutheran Church
Philo, Ill.

First Lutheran Church
Pontiac, Ill.

American Lutheran Church
Rantoul, Ill.

St. John Lutheran Church
Royal, Ill.

Prince of Peace Lutheran Church
St. Joseph, Ill.

Immanuel Lutheran Church
Thomasboro, Ill.

Indiana

St. Mark Lutheran Church
Auburn, Ind.

Peace Lutheran Church
Connersville, Ind.

St. John Lutheran Church
Fort Wayne, Ind.

Antioch Lutheran Church
Hoagland, Ind.

Living Faith Lutheran Church
Wabash, Ind.

Iowa

Badger Lutheran Church
Badger, Iowa

Eagle Grove Lutheran Church
Eagle Grove, Iowa

Shepherd of the Prairie
Huxley, Iowa

Faith Lutheran Church
Monona, Iowa

St. John Lutheran Church
Plainfield, Iowa

St. Matthew's Lutheran Church
Readlyn, Iowa

Zion Lutheran Church
Readlyn, Iowa

Zion Lutheran Church
Ruthven, Iowa

Mission in Christ Lutheran Church
Strawberry Point, Iowa

Ullensvaag Lutheran Church
Thor, Iowa

Old East Paint Creek Lutheran Church
Waterville, Iowa

Old West Paint Creek Lutheran Church
Waukon, Iowa

Kentucky

House of Prayer Lutheran Church
Elizabethtown, Ky.

Maryland

Annapolis Evangelical Lutheran Church
Annapolis, Md.

St. Matthew Lutheran Church
Baltimore, Md.

River's Edge Ministries
Mount Airy, Md.

Michigan

Salem Lutheran Church
Bark River, Mich.

St. Paul Lutheran Church
Evart, Mich.

Living Hope Lutheran Church
Farwell, Mich.

Redeemer Lutheran Church
Owosso, Mich.

Cross Lutheran Church
Pigeon, Mich.

Zion Lutheran Church
Skanee, Mich.

Minnesota

Immanuel Lutheran Church
Crosby, Minn.

Grace Lutheran Church
Erskine, Minn.

Faith Lutheran Church
Mentor, Minn.

Albion Lutheran Church
St. James, Minn.

Bethesda Lutheran Church
Wannaska, Minn.

Riverside Lutheran Church
Wannaska, Minn.

Missouri

Trinity Lutheran Church
Ava, Mo.

Nebraska

Faith Lutheran Church
Dannebrog, Neb.

New York

Christ Lutheran Church
East Amherst, N.Y.

Evangelical Lutheran Church
Gallupville, N.Y.

St. Mark Lutheran Church
Middleburgh, N.Y.

Nile Lutheran Mission
Rochester, N.Y.

North Carolina

St. John Lutheran Church
Asheboro, N.C.

Concordia Lutheran Church
China Grove, N.C.

Mount Calvary Lutheran Church
Claremont, N.C.

Miller's Lutheran Church
Hickory, N.C.

New Jerusalem Lutheran Church
Hickory, N.C.

Advent Lutheran Church
Kings Mountain, N.C.

Trinity Lutheran Church
Landis, N.C.

Bethel Lutheran Church
Lincolnton, N.C.

Grace Lutheran Church
Newton, N.C.

St. James Lutheran Church
Newton, N.C.

Christiana Lutheran Church
Salisbury, N.C.

St. Matthew's Lutheran Church
Salisbury, N.C.

Union Lutheran Church
Salisbury, N.C.

St. John Evangelical Lutheran Church
Statesville, N.C.

Holy Trinity Lutheran Church
Troutman, N.C.

Lutheran Church of the Atonement
Wilkesboro, N.C.

North Dakota

Peace Lutheran Church
Devil's Lake, N.D.

First Lutheran Church
Washburn, N.D.

Ohio

Trinity Lutheran Church
Ashland, Ohio

St. Paul Lutheran Church
Bolivar, Ohio

Upper Arlington Lutheran Church
Columbus, Ohio

Living Water Lutheran Church
Dayton, Ohio

St. John Lutheran Church
Greenville, Ohio

St. John Evangelical Lutheran Church
Grove City, Ohio

Holy Trinity Lutheran Church
Mansfield, Ohio

Oakland Lutheran Church
Mansfield, Ohio

First English Lutheran Church
Marysville, Ohio

St. Peter Lutheran Church
Monroeville, Ohio

St. John Lutheran Church
Montpelier, Ohio

Resurrection Lutheran Church
Port Clinton, Ohio

Faith in Christ Lutheran Church
Springfield, Ohio

Grace Lutheran Church
Springfield, Ohio

Trinity Lutheran Church
Springfield, Ohio

St. Paul Lutheran Church
Sulphur Springs, Ohio

Oregon

First Lutheran Church
Baker City, Ore.

Pennsylvania

Holy Trinity Evangelical Lutheran Church
Abington, Pa.

Zion Lutheran Church
Brentwood, Pa.

Lutheran Church of the Cross
Covington, Pa.

St. John Lutheran Church
Fredericksburg, Pa.

Dunmyer Lutheran Church
Johnstown, Pa.

Zoar Lutheran Church
Lebanon, Pa.

St. Stephen Lutheran Church
Pittsburgh, Pa.

St. Paul Lutheran Church
Sarver, Pa.

Christ Lutheran Church
Shelocta (Elderton), Pa.

Mount Union Lutheran Church
Shelocta (Elderton), Pa.

Reformation Lutheran Church
Silver Spring, Pa.

Hope Lutheran Church
Smethport, Pa.

One in Christ Lutheran Mission
Telford, Pa.

First Lutheran Church
Washington, Pa.

Puerto Rico

Iglesia Luterana Resurrección
Carolina, Puerto Rico

South Dakota

Badger Lutheran Church
Badger, S.D.

Heritage Lutheran Church
Brandon, S.D.

American Lutheran Church
Castlewood, S.D.

Hayti Lutheran Church
Hayti, S.D.

New Hope Lutheran Church
Hayti, S.D.

Trinity Lutheran Church
Lake Norden, S.D.

First Lutheran Church
Philip, S.D.

Genesis Lutheran Church
Rapid City, S.D.

Immanuel Lutheran Church
Whitewood, S.D.

Tennessee

Faith Lutheran Church
Chattanooga, Tenn.

Word of Life Lutheran Church
Maryville, Tenn.

Lord of Life Lutheran Church
Memphis, Tenn.

Texas

St. John Lutheran Church
Boerne, Texas

Salem Evangelical Lutheran Church
of Welcome
Brenham, Texas

First Evangelical Lutheran Church
Floresville, Texas

Holy Ghost Lutheran Church
Fredericksburg, Texas

Church of the Living God
Houston, Texas

Immanuel Lutheran Church
La Vernia, Texas

St. John Evangelical Lutheran Church
Meyersville, Texas

St. Stephen Lutheran Church
Portland, Texas

Joy Lutheran Church
Richmond, Texas

Peace Lutheran Church
Rockdale, Texas

Peace Lutheran Church
Rosenberg, Texas

St. Paul Lutheran Church
Rosenberg, Texas

St. Paul Lutheran Church
Runge, Texas

Our Savior Lutheran Church
Three Rivers, Texas

Our Saviour's Lutheran Church
Tyler, Texas

St. Paul Lutheran Church
Yorktown, Texas

Virginia

Reformation Lutheran Church
Culpeper, Va.

Lebanon Lutheran Church
Lebanon Church, Va.

Advent Lutheran Church
Winchester, Va.

Washington

Prince of Peace Lutheran Church
Everett, Wash.

St. Mark Lutheran Church
Seattle, Wash.

West Virginia

St. Timothy Lutheran Church
Charleston, W.Va.

Zion Lutheran Church
Letart, W.Va.

Wisconsin

Zion Lutheran Church
Caroline, Wis.

New Life Lutheran Church
Menomonie, Wis.

St. John's Evangelical Lutheran Church
of Nekimi
Oshkosh, Wis.

St. John Lutheran Church
Phillips, Wis.

Peace Lutheran Church
Split Rock, Wis.

Wyoming

Christ the King Lutheran Church
Newcastle, Wyo.



NALC

North American Lutheran Church



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2299 Palmer Drive, Suite 220
New Brighton, MN 55112-2202

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St. Paul, MN
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NALC Contact Information

NALC Main Office

3500 Mill Run Drive
Hilliard, OH 43026
614-777-5709
info@thenalc.org

NALC Financial Administration

NALC Upper Midwest Office
2299 Palmer Drive, Suite 220
New Brighton, MN 55112
888-551-7254
nalc.mnoffice@thenalc.org

Bishop

Bishop Paull E. Spring
956 Stratford Court
State College, PA 16801
814-235-9769
bishop@thenalc.org

General Secretary

Pastor John Bradosky
3500 Mill Run Drive
Hilliard, OH 43026
614-777-5709
jbradosky@thenalc.org

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Pastor David J. Baer, editor
news@thenalc.org

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