

NALC News

North American Lutheran Church

May 2011

Four nominated for NALC bishop

August Convocation will elect a new bishop to serve a four-year term



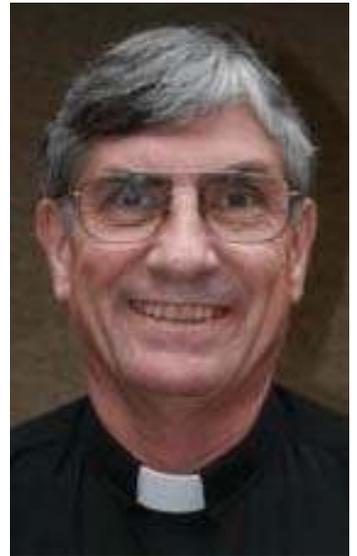
John F. Bradosky



James T. Lehmann



Paul A. Schultz



J. Larry Yoder

Four pastors have been nominated to serve as the next bishop of the North American Lutheran Church. The 2011 NALC Convocation Aug. 11-12 in Hilliard, Ohio, will elect a new bishop to serve a four-year term.

The Rev. John F. Bradosky, the Rev. James T. Lehmann, the Rev. Paul A. Schultz, and the Rev. Jacob Larry Yoder have been nominated to serve as the NALC's chief pastor and evangelist.

Yoder, 68, is a professor of religion at Lenoir-Rhyne University in Hickory, N.C. He also serves as pastor of Grace Lutheran Church in Newton, N.C. He is a graduate of Lutheran Theological Southern Seminary and Lenoir-Rhyne College. He earned his doctorate from Duke University.

Schultz, 37, is pastor of First English Lutheran Church in Marysville, Ohio. He is a graduate of Lutheran Theological Seminary at Gettysburg and Wright State University in Dayton, Ohio.

Lehmann, 59, is pastor of Immanuel Lutheran Church in Thomasboro, Ill. He is a graduate of Wartburg Theological Seminary and Southern Illinois University Carbondale.

Bradosky, 59, has served as General Secretary of the North American Lutheran Church since January. Prior to that he was senior pastor of Epiphany Lutheran Church in Dayton, Ohio. He is a graduate of Hamma School of Theology and Indiana University of Pennsylvania.

NALC Bishop Paull Spring, 72, has said that he will not be available for reelection. Bishop Spring and other provisional leaders were elected to guide the NALC through its first year by Lutheran CORE's 2010 Convocation which served as the Constituting Convocation of the NALC. These provisional leaders were elected to one-year terms so the congregations that join the NALC could elect their own leaders at the 2011 Convocation.

Continued on Page 5

John F. Bradosky

Name: The Rev. John Bradosky

Home: Centerville, Ohio

Congregation: Living Water Lutheran Church
Centerville, Ohio

Current Call: General Secretary
North American Lutheran Church
Columbus, Ohio

Experience within the body of Christ that has prepared you for service in this position:

I have been blessed by pastors and professors who were also faithful mentors in my life. My marriage of 34 years to Kristi has not only survived but thrived even through the death of our first born son. Our children and their spouses continue to grow in their witness and service to the church. My 32 years of ordained ministry in congregations includes experiences in urban, suburban and multicultural settings, with multiple campus environments and the supervision of a large staff. Serving on Synod Council, and Churchwide divisions and initiatives including: Stewardship, Outreach, Evangelism and Transformational Leadership initiative, has broadened my experience. In addition to preaching, teaching and celebrating the sacraments, discipleship has preoccupied the focus of my ministry for the past two decades including: providing leadership for the Churchwide Call to Discipleship, writing articles, Bible studies, creating conferences, addressing Synod Assemblies and providing training for Disciple Mentors. Working with missionaries in Mexico, Central America, Tanzania, Uganda and recently in Ethiopia has assisted in developing a global perspective of the missional strength of the Church available to us through the experience of those where the Church is growing at its fastest rate. In addition to those experiences I have served as President of Lutheran Bible Institute of California and as adjunct faculty there. For nine years I was on the board, chair and member of the Ethics Committee of Graceworks Lutheran Services.

Continued on Page 4

James T. Lehmann

Name: The Rev. James T. Lehmann

Home: Fithian, Illinois

Congregation: Immanuel Lutheran Church
Thomasboro, Illinois

Current Call: Pastor, Immanuel Lutheran Church
Thomasboro, Illinois

Experience within the body of Christ that has prepared you for service in this position:

I received a strong biblical and catechetical training in my youth. I have served 32 years of ordained ministry, experiencing both congregational cooperation and conflict. I have served on synod council and committees. I have experience working with colleagues (interns and associates). Traveling to Ethiopia has broadened my experience of the global church. Serving on the Executive Committee and as a dean of the NALC has helped me to know how we function and what concerns congregations have.

What spiritual gifts and skills has God given you to bless this ministry?

I have a strong foundation on the Word of God as understood from a Lutheran perspective. I enjoy teaching the Bible. The rich liturgical heritage of public worship and private prayer strengthens me. God has granted me the gift of patience. I can listen with empathy and understanding of people's experiences and positions. I work collaboratively and encourage others in their ministry.

List a favorite Scripture verse and tell why it has meaning for you.

Acts 2:42: "They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and prayers." When I commit myself to these fundamentals: Scripture, fellowship, Eucharist, and prayer, I stay on track, find inner strength, and grow in faith. These tools of the Holy Spirit "calls, gathers, enlightens, and sanctifies the whole Christian Church and keeps it united in the one true faith."

Paul A. Schultz

Name: The Rev. Paul A. Schultz

Home: Marysville, Ohio

Congregation: First English Lutheran Church
Marysville, Ohio

Current Call: Pastor, First English Lutheran Church
Marysville, Ohio

Experience within the body of Christ that has prepared you for service in this position:

Since 2006, it has been my privilege to serve the congregation of First English Lutheran Church in the ministry of Word and Sacrament; to care for and encourage the faithful people God has entrusted to me. In my time there, the Lord has seen fit to bless us with growth and new life, as our witness to the Gospel of Jesus Christ is invigorated in our congregation and community. I formerly served as chair of the Mission Strategy Team for Congregational Support for the Southern Ohio Synod of the ELCA, and like the other nominees, have led my congregation toward orthodoxy and into the NALC, united and standing firmly on God's Word. I currently serve as secretary of the Marysville Area Ministerial Association, and am a member of the Society of the Holy Trinity, the Seven Marks Society, Lutheran CORE, and now, the NALC.

What spiritual gifts and skills has God given you to bless this ministry?

I understand the office of Bishop to be first and foremost a pastoral office, and it is the office of pastor for which the Lord has gifted me and to which He has called me. God has blessed me with gifts for preaching His saving Gospel of Grace in Jesus Christ, along with gifts for worship leadership, chief among them a burning desire for the sacraments of Baptism and the Eucharist. It has been the highest honor of my life to use these God-given gifts as a servant of Jesus Christ in His church. In addition, I have been gifted with skills for good pastoral care and leadership, having

Continued on Page 4

Jacob Larry Yoder

Name: The Rev. Jacob Larry Yoder, PhD, STS

Home: Lincolnton, North Carolina

Congregation: Grace Evangelical Lutheran Church
Newton, North Carolina

Current Call: Professor of Religion
Lenoir-Rhyne University
Hickory, North Carolina

Pastor, Grace Lutheran Church
Newton, North Carolina

Experience within the body of Christ that has prepared you for service in this position:

A childhood and youth of growing up on the farm, learning in closeness to God's good earth. 45 years married to the woman I love and who loves me. Three sons and daughters-in-law and two granddaughters. Parish life in North Carolina and California that nurtured and challenged faith. 42 years of pastoral ministry: Leading worship, celebrating the Eucharist each Sunday, baptizing the newly born and newly reborn, teaching the children. Preaching (parish and college), teaching (college and parish), administration (academic and parish), interchanging ideas. Caring for persons who are troubled, ill, grieving, growing, rejoicing.

What spiritual gifts and skills has God given you to bless this ministry?

A strong body (thus far); a gift of curiosity both spiritual and intellectual. Ability to mediate between ideas and persons. Ability to find consensus with little of substance compromised. A capacity to see the key issues and to lay out possible avenues for solution, weighing and analyzing without prejudice. Experience in speaking to audiences from the interested to the hostile to the barely-beyond-bored. A work ethic forged on the farm and in the study, the classroom and the parish.

Continued on Page 4

Paul A. Schultz

Continued from Page 3

graduated from Gettysburg Seminary with honors in pastoral ministry. God has given me a passionate zeal for His Gospel, and an enthusiasm for the faith of His holy, catholic and apostolic church — the very faith we seek to defend and live out in the NALC.

List a favorite Scripture verse and tell why it has meaning for you.

One of my favorite readings is from the 12th chapter of Hebrews, summed up in 1b-2a *“And let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us, fixing our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of faith.”* The race before us is the race of *discipleship*. Yet on this track, the goal we pursue isn't to come in first, but to run the race well and to the very end, using the best of all we have and all we are in service to Christ. These verses remind me that He is continually calling us to take up our cross—to hold the course and to never give up! And so, we strive always toward the goal of faithful discipleship, secure in the knowledge that the greatest prize has already been won for us by Jesus, “the pioneer and perfecter of faith.”

J. Larry Yoder

Continued from Page 3

List a favorite Scripture verse and tell why it has meaning for you.

This verse from St. John is at the heart of the faith: “For God so loved the world that He gave His only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him shall not perish, but have everlasting life.” — John 3:16 This verse declares the love of God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, in the Incarnation, Death, and Resurrection of God the Son in Jesus Christ ... and life and salvation for those who are redeemed by His grace.

John F. Bradosky

Continued from Page 2

What spiritual gifts and skills has God given you to bless this ministry?

Through assessment tools and conversations with those who have provided mentoring in my ministry, I believe my spiritual gifts include: Leadership, Teaching, Administration, Discernment and Evangelism as it relates to discipleship. My devotional life and commitment to the spiritual disciplines keeps my faith growing and challenges me daily in following Jesus. The richness of our confessional heritage keeps me grounded, growing and grateful for opportunities to share the Gospel of Jesus Christ with others. Through varied leadership experiences I have developed skills in the areas of strategic planning, metrics, “balanced scorecard” and branding identity. Through my avocation as a sports official in high school and collegiate basketball, football and soccer, I have also learned critical leadership skills regarding integrity, preparedness, fitness, accountability, decision making, resolving conflict and dealing with passionate people in frustrating circumstances. In training for marathons, I have also learned about perseverance and endurance in running the race.

List a favorite Scripture verse and tell why it has meaning for you.

John 15:12-13: “My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you. Greater love has no one than this, that he lay down his life for his friends.” Jesus is preparing His disciples for his death and he reminds them to remain in Him even as He is willing to remain in them. The relationship with Jesus has grown more intimate and He no longer calls them servants but friends. Through the indwelling presence and faithful obedience they not only grow closer to Christ but He promises their lives will be fruitful. This word reminds me of the most important value in my ministry, the preciousness of relationships. It is the only thing in this life that lasts or matters. Jesus points out that everything else is dust and rust. All we have that gives life meaning, purpose and direction are relationships: a relationship with Jesus Christ through faith in Him and relationships with those He has given us, to love and care for. In Christ those relationships are eternal. That is the nature of our faith, discipleship and the Church. We are all giving our life away for some cause, but the words and example of Christ are to give our life for the sake of those relationships.

NALC Convocation is August 11-12

Lutheran CORE Convocation is Aug. 9, Theological Conference is Aug. 10-11

The 2011 Convocation of the North American Lutheran Church will meet Thursday and Friday, Aug. 11-12, in Hilliard, Ohio.

Convocation delegates will elect leaders for the NALC including a new bishop and members of the Executive Council and Court of Adjudication. They will also consider constitutional amendments and the church body's 2012 budget.

Voting delegates for the NALC Convocation — the annual meeting of the NALC — include lay people elected by their congregations and all NALC pastors. Each congregation is entitled to at least one lay delegate. Those who are not delegates for the Convocation are welcome to attend as visitors.

The \$75 registration fee for the Convocation includes supper on Thursday and lunch on Friday.

The NALC Convocation is one of three events to take place Aug. 9-12 at Upper Arlington Lutheran Church's Mill Run Campus in Hilliard, Ohio.

Lutheran CORE's 2011 Convocation meets on Tuesday, Aug. 9. The Rev. Dr. Gemechis D. Buba, Missions Director of the NALC, will deliver the keynote address.

The Lutheran CORE Convocation will elect members of Lutheran CORE's Steering Committee and consider constitutional amendments and a budget for 2012. There also will be two sessions of workshops for congregational ministry and a breakout session for congregations in different situations.

The registration fee of \$50 includes lunch and supper.

To vote at the Lutheran CORE Convocation, individuals must be enrolled as individual members of Lutheran CORE — rather than members through their congregation or church body. Visitors are welcome to attend. Individuals may join Lutheran CORE by completing the membership form at www.lutherancore.org or by requesting a membership form from the Lutheran CORE office by calling 888-551-7254.

"Salvation Today" is the theme of the NALC-Lutheran CORE theological conference Aug. 10-11. Registration for the theological conference is \$95.

You may register online for any or all of the events at www.thenalc.org or you may call 888-551-7254 to request a registration form.

Bishop is to be chief pastor and evangelist

Continued from Page 1

NALC congregations had the opportunity to nominate individuals to serve as bishop. The NALC Constitution requires that the names of those nominated to serve as bishop be sent to NALC congregations 90 days prior to the Convocation that will elect the bishop. The four nominees were those received at the time the notice was to be sent.

Additional nominations may be made from the floor at the Convocation. All nominees must be received as NALC pastors by the date of the Convocation.

The NALC Constitution explains that "The Bishop shall serve as the chief pastor and chief evangelist of the NALC, responsible for ensuring the priority of the Great Commission in the life of the church.

"The Bishop shall carry out a pastoral ministry within the church, serving as pastor for the pastors and congregations of the NALC. The Bishop shall preach the Gospel, forgive sins, administer the Sacraments and judge doctrine (Augsburg Confession XXVIII). The Bishop shall carry out a ministry of visitation throughout the church, will be a defender of the faith and will promote the mission of the church," the constitution says.

Amendments to NALC constitution to be considered by Convocation

Amendments have been proposed for the Constitution of the North American Lutheran Church. The proposed amendments will be considered by the NALC Convocation Aug. 11-12 in Hilliard, Ohio.

The proposed amendments were approved by the NALC Executive Council. They are available online at www.thenalc.org. They also have been mailed to NALC congregations.

Lutheran CORE's 2010 Convocation approved a provisional constitution for the NALC and elected provisional leaders to guide the NALC through its first year.

Most of the amendments to the constitution remove provisions related to the first year of the NALC's life. The constitution included several provisions addressing the NALC's first year such as providing leaders for the first year and electing of leaders to staggered terms at the 2011 Convocation.

Amendments to the constitution must be approved by a two-thirds majority at the Convocation and ratified by two-thirds of NALC congregations.

A proposed amendment also clarifies the process for the ratification of constitutional amendments by congregations by stating that a two-thirds majority of those congregations voting is what is required.

'Salvation Today' is theme of the NALC-Lutheran CORE Theological Conference

"Salvation Today" is the theme of the NALC-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 is Aug. 9. The Convocation of the North American Lutheran Church is Aug. 11-12. The convocations and theological conference will be held at Upper Arlington Lutheran Church in Hilliard, Ohio.

Registration for the theological conference is \$95. You may register online for the theological conference and convocations at www.thenalc.org.

"This theological conference will focus on the central theme of Biblical-Christian faith, God's gift of salvation in Jesus Christ. To proclaim the good news of Christ's salvation to all the nations is the chief reason for the church's being," 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

Leaders of NALC and LCMC meet

Leaders of the North American Lutheran Church met with leaders of Lutheran Congregations in Mission for Christ April 12-13 to consider how the two church bodies might better work together to advance the cause of Christ and to empower congregations to carry out the Great Commission.

The NALC was represented by Bishop Paull Spring; Pastor John Bradosky, General Secretary; Pastor Gemechis Buba, Missions Director; and Pastor David Wendell, chair of the NALC's Ecumenical Relations Committee.

LCMC was represented by Pastor Rebecca Lee, chair of the LCMC Board of Trustees; Pastor John Waak, vice chair of the LCMC Board of Trustees; Pastor Tim White, chair of the LCMC Ministry Board; Pastor Paul Spaulding, LCMC Pastoral Certification Coordinator; and Pastor Mark Vander Tuig, LCMC Service Coordinator.

Initially some time was spent getting to know the people around the table and gaining a deeper appreciation for the two organizations and their respective structures. Areas of discussion included pastoral certification, training for the next generation of pastoral leadership, training and support for new congregations, international missions and areas where cooperation would be a natural fit.

Those who attended reported that all those present were grateful for the chance to talk, listen and grow in their appreciation for each church body, better appreciating our similarities and differences. There was also a sense of hope for a developing partnership in mission and ministry.

This was a great beginning to a fruitful working relationship and a commitment was made to continue this conversation. A second meeting is scheduled for September in Columbus, Ohio.

Congregation responds to storms

Members of Faith Lutheran Church in Chatanooga, Tenn., responded to the terrible storms in their area by providing food, time and funds to help in the relief efforts. The congregation — a new NALC mission start — is willing to work with congregations and groups who would like to help with the storm recovery efforts.

For more information contact Jon McKenzie at 423-364-1162 or seabee1224@msn.com. Financial donations to help their relief efforts may be sent to: Faith Lutheran Church, PO Box 288318, Chattanooga, TN 37424.



Executive Council approves ministry documents

The NALC Executive Council has approved documents that will provide standards for NALC pastors.

“Standards for Pastoral Ministry” articulates the expectations the NALC has for its pastors. It also includes a section outlining the process for the discipline of ordained ministers should that become necessary.

A second document outlines the “Candidacy Process” for preparing individuals for pastoral ministry in the NALC. This document outlines the ongoing supervision the NALC has of its seminary students in helping them prepare for ministry and how candidates are certified.

Both documents are available on the NALC's website — www.thenalc.org.

Midwest NALC Conference in Minnesota

More than 150 people from five states attended the Midwest NALC Conference April 2 at Grace Lutheran Church in Erskine, Minn.

NALC Bishop Paull Spring spoke about the life and growth happening in the NALC, sharing the good news about the number of congregations already in the NALC with the number increasing every week. He also shared some of his experiences at the International Mission Conference in Ethiopia — about how all of the delegation from the NALC was welcomed with appreciation and warmth.

The Rev. Dr. James Nestingen preached from 1 Peter 2:9: “You are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God.” He said that the fact that we belong to God is not something that we have accomplished for ourselves, it is God who is doing this. He said that we are connected to Christians across the world, even and especially in Ethiopia, Tanzania, Australia, and New Zealand. We are not alone, never were, and should not consider that we will be.

During the afternoon session, Professor Nestingen spoke about “What is the Church?” from Article 7 of the Augsburg Confession. He broke the article into



Bishop Spring, Professor Nestingen and Pastor Timothy Lundeen answered questions at NALC conference.

three parts: the hearer, the gathered, and the Sacraments.

Bishop Spring, Professor Nestingen, and Pastor Timothy Lundeen, pastor of Grace and a NALC dean, later formed a panel to receive and answer questions about the NALC. An offering of \$926 was given to support the church in Ethiopia.

Nominations requested for Executive Council

Congregations of the North American Lutheran Church are encouraged to nominate individuals to serve as members of the NALC Executive Council.

The 2011 NALC Convocation Aug. 11-12 in Hilliard, Ohio, will elect four lay people and four clergy to staggered terms of one to four years.

NALC congregations may nominate candidates 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.

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

Each NALC congregation was sent a letter explaining the nominating process. The information is also available online 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.

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

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.

American Lutheran Church

Rantoul, Illinois

Meeting the culture head-on, American Lutheran Church in Rantoul, Illinois — ALC for short, and not to be confused with the denomination — started its life over 80 years ago as an English-speaking congregation serving the children of German immigrants and their families.

A willingness to try new things for the sake of the mission has been here from the beginning. A mission developer was sent by the newly-formed church (the “old” ALC denomination), shortly followed by a mission pastor who helped the new congregation get on its feet.

A young man straight out of seminary came to serve as the first long-term pastor. He would remain 25 years before taking his second call as the District President (bishop) of the Illinois District of the newly-formed “new” ALC denomination in 1960.

Under his dynamic leadership, the fellowship grew. Worship services moved from one place to another not once, but twice. In 1951, the first portion of what we now call the old sanctuary was dedicated. The second portion would come 15 years later with an even larger sanctuary, our third one.



More importantly, the set direction of the ALC congregation from the 1930s until the present time has always been a clear Confessional Lutheran understanding of Law and Gospel.

Although the first long-term pastor (and subsequent District President) retired in the 1970s, he made sure the second long-term pastor — who served from 1971 until 1998 — would continue the clear Confessional Lutheran understanding of Word and Sacrament. He was one of us, so to speak.

Seven years ago, when it was time for our latest pastor, that desire to have someone speak the old time understanding of the Gospel caused a three-and-a-half-year wait before finding one.

Continued on Page 10

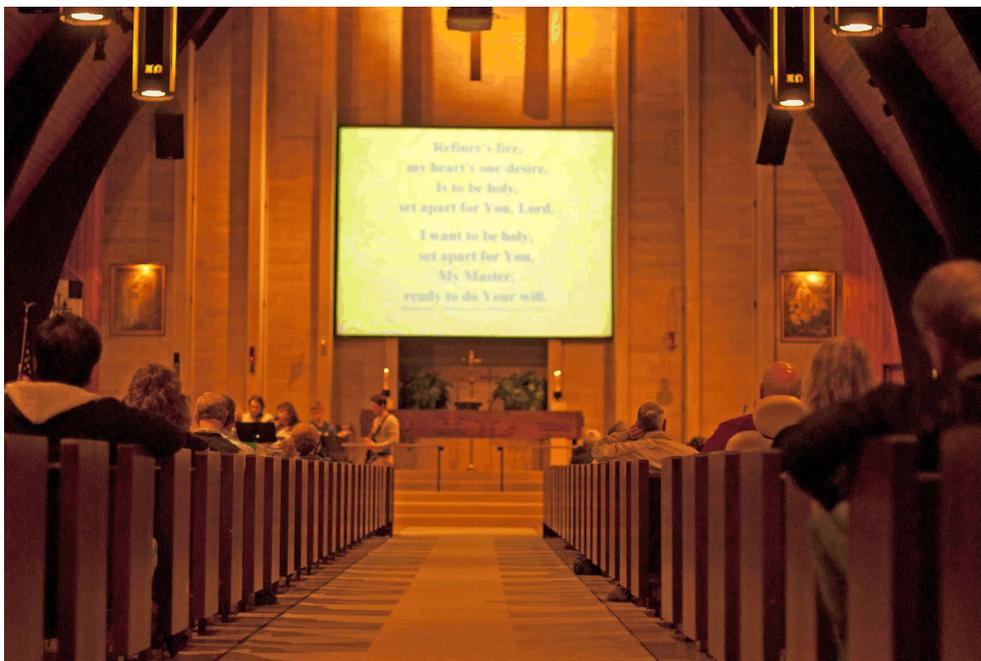


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We live in a community of 13,000 people. For 76 years, Chanute Air Force Base was located on the edge of our community. Surrounding us is some of the best farm land in the country. We are and have been blessed. From strong roots, we are surrounded by sister congregations who are also a part of the North American Lutheran Church.

When the North American Lutheran church was formed, ALC wanted to be a part of it. A sense of a new direction and being able to feel at home with the NALC provides a natural fit for us. It's not really new, but the good old faith being given a new chance to thrive. We are ready for that kind of focus.

ALC has always been mission driven. Along with our sister congregations, many pastors have been raised in this area. We are currently supporting our 21st native son in seminary. Many of our local and older congregations helped establish mission congregations. It's exciting to think that we're going back into the mission business as one of our core values. Along with other national and international ministry support, we have included a line item in our benevolence for the next mission start. A mission Sunday is a traditional way of reminding us that the body of Christ is everywhere and needs the help that our blessed agricultural community can provide.



Central to the life of the congregation is its continuing focus on growing disciples of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Sunday School (literally for all ages and interests), Vacation Bible School, Confirmation, Senior High Youth, Junior High Fellowship (Fusion), Elementary fellowship (Y.E.A.R.S.) and multiple Bible studies have rounded out the desire for us to be a place of learning, growing, and fellowship. We recognize the need to grow in these areas in order to meet future needs. These learning opportunities and activities have the goal of strengthening the bond that develops in fellowship. This bond reaches beyond the church walls and into the community.

Of course, there has always been music. We have both a Senior Choir and Praise Band which are a part of our weekly worship services. People of all ages share their talents.

As a larger congregation, there are many weddings and funerals throughout the year.

We continue to host regional gatherings, and most recently, simulcasts of nationally known teachers were open to the larger faith community and were held here. We have had many concerts over the years, ranging from symphonies to current national artists and traveling praise bands. There's always been room for a little more music.



Continued on Page 11



And that is OK, because the heart of this congregation is to reach out to all in the name of Christ on His behalf. We are part of a team, a team that stretches through time with the Communion of Saints and throughout the world in many and varied ways, all for the sake of reaching people of every time, tribe, tongue and nation with the Gospel. It is our prayer that we remain faithful, focused and vibrant until our Lord returns.

It is good to be with like-minded Lutherans whose values are the same as ours. We look forward to the Lord's working through our midst, that is, the North American Lutheran Church, as we do mission for the sake of the Gospel. We begin every worship service with the reminder that "God is good all the time." We have been blessed over the years and pray that the blessing continues as we reach out to others in Christ's name. We feel privileged to be a part of this newly-formed body and pray the Lord's blessings on us all as we reach out to a world that needs to know the Way, Truth and Life that comes through our Lord!

Continued from page 10

When the first sanctuary on our current site was built, land was set aside. Today, in the middle of the cemetery, is a flag memorial. Flying the colors of each branch of military service, the State of Illinois, the United States, and the POW/MIA flag, this memorial remembers our nation's veterans. In front of our church is the Christian flag, reminding us of our first allegiance to our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

From the beginning, ALC has tried new things to reach out with our traditional understanding of the Gospel. From preaching in English to German-speaking immigrants to a traditionally-grounded contemporary service with a big screen and large sound, we continue to reach out in new ways with "specialized" ministries. Our goal is to meet some of the cultural issues invading the fellowship by revitalizing and refocusing our Youth and Family Ministry. Rather than doing nothing about the negative changes in our culture, we meet them head on. We do struggle, but by working through new ideas as we wrestle with them, we are able to reach out to people in a traditional and faithful way with the Good News of the Gospel.

Most of our members do not know or remember that we are actually incorporated as St. Paul Congregation of the American Lutheran Church. From the beginning, we have understood that we were and are a local outpost of the larger church and so the name American Lutheran Church is what we have always gone by and are known as.

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.



Youth Encounter

By Rev. Dr. Larry Dean Johnson
Youth Encounter President

In many ways, the genius of Youth Encounter is the way it engages young people in sharing their Christian faith with their peers and younger peers. Music and relationships serve as the means of ministry by which their witness is made. Events and teams facilitate their witness by bringing people together.

Even though it was not originally an intentional goal, it has become apparent that engaging youth in sharing their Christian faith has also equipped them for Christian leadership. Over 1,500 young adults have served on year-long ministry teams and over 70 percent of them have gone on to serve as professional church leaders.



It has also become apparent that this ministry prepares young people for marriage and family life.

John Burns of Stoughton, Wis., comments that he watched his son Ryan's team ". . . grow together in His name, growing in love and respect for each other and for the Lord. They learn how to become a family before ever starting a family, enduring hardships and sharing joys every day."

Cheryl Ralston of Holy Springs, NC, shares her joy in the marriage of her son Kevin to fellow team alumna Bodil. *"This is a Godly couple who've begun their marriage on a solid, faith-centered foundation. They end each day with a devotion and prayer time together. I think this is something they both learned from the time spent with Youth Encounter. When two young people put their faith first, trust in God, and are also so clearly in love, I believe they'll navigate whatever the world puts in front of them."*

The deterioration of marriage and family life has precipitated a crisis in the lives of young people, a crisis Youth Encounter intends to address in the coming years.

The alarming seriousness of this crisis is clearly presented in *Hardwired to Connect*, "A Report to the Nation from the Commission on Children at Risk," a group of 33 children's doctors, research scientists, and mental health and youth service professionals. According to this report:

! American children and adolescents are in crisis, a crisis with two parts: their deteriorating mental and behavioral health and the erosion of the environmental conditions that are contributing to growing numbers of suffering children.



Continued on Page 13

! The crisis is caused in large part by a lack of connectedness, *connectedness to other people* and *connectedness to moral and spiritual meaning*.

! The breakdown of marriage and family life is a critical causal factor and a critical factor in addressing the crisis in an effort to restore the well being of children and youth.



! It is incumbent upon all citizens, organizations, and government offices to prioritize the development of “authoritative communities,” marriage and family being the most foundational of all such communities.

Youth Encounter intends to address issues concerning marriage and family (*connectedness to other people*) and the making of Christian disciples that occurs in Christian families (*connectedness to moral and spiritual meaning*).

Event and team ministries will be designed for this purpose, and supportive materials developed. In this way, Youth Encounter intends to partner with congregations and parents to support young people in making the wise choices that prepare them for healthy Christian single, married, and family living and ministry.

This coming year Youth Encounter will present 33 regional youth events (Quakes and Zones), one choral event (Sounds Like Love), five national teams (Captive Free), and two international teams (Cross Fire to Eastern Africa and Watermark to Germany and Eastern Europe).

In their summer ministry, teams are available for VBS weeks. Global Work Crews are also presented, including mission projects customized for congregations.

Youth Encounter is excited to introduce the following new ministries:

! The national youth event, Impact: registration is still open for Chicago, July 7-10, 2011. In 2012, the event is scheduled July 5-8 in Nashville.

! Some of the regional events have a special emphasis: supporting young people in making the wise choices that prepare them for healthy Christian single, married, and family living. These events include encouragement for reserving sexual intimacy for marriage.

! One-night events with special emphasis will be piloted in various cities.

! Christ-centered food-packing service events are available to interested congregations. These events are made possible through a partnership with Kids Against Hunger.

! Selected regional events offer a Saturday afternoon leadership training workshop for volunteer and professional church leaders.

Information on these ministries is made available (as it is developed) at www.youthencounter.org. Leaders interested in bringing either a special emphasis event or a meal-packing event to their city are welcome to contact Youth Encounter at 800-659-6884 or info@youthencounter.org.

Your prayers, support, and participation in the ministry of Youth Encounter are welcomed and appreciated.

Vision for Mission

By the Rev. Dr. Gemechis Desta Buba
NALC Missions Director

When Jesus saw the crowds, He had compassion on them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. Then He said to His disciples, "The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into His harvest field." — Matthew 9:36-38

Visionary mission leaders are called to lead with a vision of abundance in the harvest field. Death, scarcity and decline are not their thing. Possibility for growth and opportunity to expand are part of their dominant paradigm or worldview. That is how they think and act. By these visible marks we know that they are driven into the mission field by the Holy Spirit of God that gave birth to the Church in the most unlikely time in history.

If we open our eyes, in this post-modern age we surely see a crowded village called the 21st century world. In a similar way Jesus' village was full of multitudes of people. They were many and their life circumstances were chaotic. They were people living like a sheep without a shepherd. They were described as people who were harassed and helpless.

Jesus found people like that throughout the entire nation of Israel, and He had compassion on them. His compassion came from His vision. Blind sightedness or lack of proper attention will result in a misguided and confused vision. That lack of clear vision translates into lack of compassion for the needy world. In the same way the absence of compassion makes us live without any passion for mission.

Jesus looked at the people throughout the regions of Judea, Samaria and Galilee very intently and purposefully. He walked, talked, ate, lived and shared life with the people in order to see what they saw and gain access deeply into their quintessential



NALC Missions Director Gemechis Desta Buba addresses the Oromo Ilammee Mission Convention in Ethiopia.

world. That was a very intentional hard look at the society in which He lived. It was not a casual look at the day-to-day flow of the people in front of His eyes. It was a clear exercise by Jesus as a participant observer to share their life and get deeper into their real experiences. As a result of that intentional look and access into their world, Jesus was overwhelmed with compassion, which also resulted in His burning passion to make a radical difference in their lives.

Today there are millions of passionate Christians around the world impacting their neighbors with this burning passion of Jesus. At the same time there are thousands of churches and Christians who suffer from lack of that burning and overwhelming compassion for others.

Lack of passion for mission comes from lack of clear vision for mission. As Christian churches we are constantly engaged in serving others. We carry out those services in many ways. Those acts of service or charity should not be just for the sake of doing something good for others. Generative and natural Christian mission is deeply grounded in our compassion for those who are harassed and helpless.

Continued on Page 15

Continued from Page 14

Matthew 9:36 tells us that Jesus saw His people. I am not quite sure if His disciples were seeing the same thing Jesus was seeing. Jesus and His disciples were living among the people and looking at the same crowd; however, they were having two distinct visions.

! Jesus was looking at the people as a harvest, but the disciples were looking at the people simply as a crowd of men and women.

! Jesus looked at the people as helpless, harassed and as a sheep without a shepherd. His disciples were looking at the usual and normal flow of people throughout the region.

Therefore, Jesus and His disciples were having different levels of compassion for the people. That was due to the variation in the essence of what they were seeing. Lack of a unified vision leads to lack of a unified compassion. Thus where there is no shared passion we cannot expect to have a unified vision for mission and go into the world as a unified body. That point proves Proverbs 29:18, "Where there is no **revelation**, people cast off restraint; but blessed is the one who heeds wisdom's instruction."

Jesus' disciples were simply seeing many people. Their vision was superficial and not deep enough to be real. Jesus had to interpret what they were seeing. He told them, what you see out there is a harvest field with a vast and abundant harvest. This act of interpreting what they saw, tells us that vision is not simply seeing what is in front of us. Instead, vision is the final outcome of a well-processed interpretation of what we see.

From that time forward, whenever and wherever they saw a large or small group of people, these faithful disciples of Jesus were looking at a ripe harvest to be harvested into the Kingdom of God. In the same text Jesus was sharing with them that He was the Lord of the harvest field. Many people think that Jesus is the master of the storehouse. That storehouse is the Church. However, Jesus fully disclosed himself not just as the head of the Church but also as the Lord of the harvest field.

One of the greatest mistakes we make in mission is when we assume that Jesus is in the Church and

not in the world. In other words, many Christians think that Jesus is the Lord of the Church and not of the world. That is a wrong assumption. Matthew 9:38 clearly teaches us that Jesus is already out there. We are not asked to do something new; we are called out into the world to join Him in the harvest field.

There are several churches praying, "Lord, send us a good pastor." That is not a wrong prayer to pray. However, this text commands us to pray saying, Lord, send **out** many faithful and compassionate workers into the harvest field. Matt. 9:38, clearly commands us saying, "Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, **to send out** workers into His harvest field."

One of the most crippling problems in the life of many churches and denominations is their chronic tendency of making congregations simple receivers of workers rather than sending agencies of workers into the world. In those circumstances church workers are expected to be stewards or managers of the storehouse. They are instructed and trained to sustain the status quo and support that chronic system. That system is attractive to many because it gives a false sense of security and stability.

When churches and ministers buy into those systems they lose their sense of mission, abandon their vision for the lost world, grow cold in their zeal for Christ's mission and lose their identity as workers of the harvest field. That reality is what is crippling churches and denominations all around us. It is becoming a major problem that is weakening churches and their witness in the declining 21st century Christendom. That Christendom is suffering tremendous loss throughout the western world.

Jesus envisioned and instructed his disciples that they should intently fix their eyes on the harvest field, and consistently pray that He would send workers out into the world. Their mission is to bring the harvest to the house of the Lord. That kind of ministry calling is edgy, risky and requires faith. It calls us to trust God's Word and be out there by clinging to the promise of Jesus to be with us. That kind of faith takes you out of the storehouse and puts you in the middle of the harvest field. That

Continued on Page 16

means you leave the comfort, safety and security of the storehouse and venture into the risk of the harvest field. Your only security is holding on to the truth of God's Holy Word and clinging to the promise of Jesus. In many cases people prefer and choose to stay in the comfort and security of being stewards and managers of the storehouse than to obey the Great Commission to go into the harvest field. However, thankfully there are numerous servants out there in the middle of the harvest field.

Life and work in the harvest field may look like a lonely and thankless job in the Kingdom. However, those in the harvest field can tell you a completely different story. The Lord of the harvest field is Jesus Himself. He orchestrates what happens on the mission field. Jesus is proven to be a faithful companion, absolute master in charge of mission and true leader in the mission field. The role of the worker is to be a consistent, faithful and obedient witness to the acts of Jesus in the world. Our witness connects people to Jesus, and then Jesus brings the whole process of missional engagement to a fruitful closure as people are led into the Kingdom of God.

The North American Lutheran Church is openly committed to be a Christ-centered, mission-driven, congregationally-focused and traditionally-grounded church body. This church keeps its mission-driven and congregationally-focused attributes in balance and interdependence. Any church that is committed to be mission-driven is expected to put the responsibility of mission where it belongs. Responsibility for mission should be put in the hands of active disciples of Jesus and their congregations. These congregations of active and faithful disciples of Jesus are always at the forefront of the mission field.

God calls all congregations to be accountable and authoritative stewards of their responsibility for mission. That is why we say we are mission-driven with a clear focus on congregations. Congregations can and should independently or interdependently plan and carry out their mission locally, nationally and globally.

In the 19th and 20th centuries many denominations took the responsibility and authority of mission out of congregations and placed it in some distant missions department of a denomination. That action transformed congregations from dynamic centers of

mission to local agencies for the implementation of denominational policies, mission programs and simple recipients of mission workers. That approach weakened congregational drive for mission and dwarfed the role and voice of congregations in mission. As a result mainline denominations lost members, congregations, faithful leaders and financial resources in large amounts.

The North American Lutheran Church is openly committed to be a Christ-centered, mission-driven, congregationally-focused and traditionally-grounded church body.

In contrast, one can look at the global south where the responsibility and authority of mission is still in the hands of congregations; those churches are growing at unprecedented rates. The Ethiopian Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus and the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Tanzania are living examples of this fact. Today the Mekane Yesus Church in Ethiopia has planted nearly 3,000 mission congregations which are under development at the same time. None of those mission congregations are planted by a mission department of that church body. All of those congregations are planted and cared for by congregations who carry out their vision for mission and interdependently discharge it in the mission field.

Continued on Page 17

On the other hand, the North American Lutheran Church states that it is traditionally-grounded. These two attributes, namely mission-driven and traditionally-grounded, should also be taken and looked at in a balanced juxtaposition. Mission-driven and traditionally-grounded attributes are not at odds with each other. Mission obviously drives us to unusual and new territories. That doesn't mean that we are going to conform to every demand that comes with the new territory or with the new contextual social milieu. That social milieu may have a tremendous cultural and political pressure. However, we are instructed in Romans 12:1 not to conform to the values of this world. In those circumstances we have to remember the fact that, as the Church of Jesus Christ, we are called to march through history without compromise. Grounded in the traditions of the Church, we have to be faithful stewards and pass on the non-negotiable pillars of our faith:

! Our faith in the Triune God — Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

! Salvation through faith in Jesus Christ alone.

! The authority of Scripture over our faith and life.

! Christian confessions and creeds.

! Marriage between one man and one woman and Biblical family values.

! Confession and forgiveness of sins.

! Word and Sacrament.

! Explicit commitment and obedience to the Great Commandment and the Great Commission.

Grounded in the 2,000-year-old Christian tradition we are commissioned to go into all corners of the 21st century world in order to share the Gospel and serve humanity in need. Mission is not done at the expense of our core beliefs and teachings. Mission is accomplished as we maintain the balance and the unbreakable link among all of our attributes:

mission-driven, traditionally-grounded, congregationally-focused and Christ-centered.

In conclusion, having a clear vision for mission determines our passion for ministry. Jesus took His disciples on a three-year journey up and down the regions of Judea, Samaria and Galilee. During those three years He interpreted what they saw and translated it into a fresh concept called “the harvest field.” Then Jesus asked them to constantly pray to the Lord of the harvest and to send workers **out** into the field. In the NALC, LCMC and other faithful churches, congregations, pastors and disciples are called to keep the total responsibility and authority of doing mission in the hands of active disciples in congregations. As a mission driven church we are also committed to be traditionally-grounded and to pass on the pillars of our faith to the next generation without diluting or compromising on any of those teachings.

- ! **Planting new congregations.**
- ! **Revitalizing our existing congregations.**
- ! **Raising and equipping missional leaders.**
- ! **International mission connections.**

Grounded in these values the North American Lutheran Church missions office is focused on accomplishing four missional goals exclusively and intentionally through congregations. Those goals are:

! Planting new congregations.

! Revitalizing our existing congregations.

! Raising and equipping missional leaders.

! International mission connections.

Our mission office works through congregations to encourage, equip, inspire and mobilize disciples of Jesus to discharge those mission driven responsibilities in the harvest field. May God continue to grant us grace to live out the fullness of His vision for mission.

Addressing Five Ministry Challenges

In Pursuit of the Great Commission

By Pastor Don Brandt

In the last issue I mentioned five ministry challenges that can negatively impact a congregation's outreach potential. With this article I want to consider some ways these ministry challenges can be addressed.

Your Mission Context: Specifically, what can be done when your local community is losing population and/or in economic decline? In this kind of mission context it is more important than ever that your congregation be proactive in addressing the needs of the surrounding community. Assess what the primary needs are in your area. Launch one or more community service ministries to address those needs. If you feel that your people are not equipped to own and operate a new ministry single-handed, then look for existing charitable organizations you can team up with. When possible, seek out charitable organizations that self-identify as Christian. Examples of nationwide Christian charities that might have programs in your community include Habitat for Humanity and Interfaith Hospitality Network. We all know about Habitat, a charity that probably has the best public image of any Christian organization in the country. Interfaith Hospitality Network is a ministry which organizes congregations to provide shelter and meals — perhaps four to six weeks per year — for families transitioning from homelessness to their own apartment. In my community Interfaith has 12 different congregations taking turns with having families sleep over (a week at a time), with an additional eight congregations that just help with meals and volunteers. Another possibility is for your congregation to consider something like a “Compassion Weekend” once a year. This is where the entire congregation is mobilized to participate in a variety of service projects over the same weekend. This is also an ideal event to publicize in the local paper.

Even if your mission context is relatively stable, it's tough out there when it comes to how few Americans are actively participating in church life. For example, one estimate I just read on a website was that only 18 percent of Americans “regularly attend” church! There are very few community settings where your mission context makes congregational evangelism easy. So don't beat yourself up! Just be ready to try something new, and “pull the plug” when a ministry is no longer accomplishing anything of value. Caution: It's

sometimes easier to let an outdated or ineffective ministry die a slow death than try to shut it down. Just don't expend your own limited time and energy on programs that are no longer serving the needs of either your congregation or the surrounding community.

When congregation's median age is older than the surrounding community: To begin with, consider capitalizing on this reality by expanding your ministry to seniors! Remember: This age group is far more receptive to “organized religion” than any other generation. And seniors have a whole range of needs you might consider addressing. Or what about a new small-group Bible study for seniors? Or possibly monthly outings for this age group.

As for this challenge as it contributes to the difficulty of maintaining ministries for children and youth: For your **children**, the primary challenge is maintaining your Sunday School. If your numbers of children are so low that a more traditional Sunday School model is unworkable, consider Sunday School for *families*. By this I don't mean one class for parents and separate classes for children; I mean a Sunday School for children and their parents to experience *together*. An additional idea for children's ministry is to organize outings for children. This, again, could involve parents if there are too few children to participate in these types of outings.

Regarding **youth ministry**, sometimes the best strategy for building a youth program is by creating and growing an effective children's ministry program. Children tend to be easier to recruit and motivate than youth, and they are also more inclined to participate in events and classes that involve their parents. Another possible strategy with youth is to partner with neighboring congregations to do combined youth activities. However, when you do this try to still, at minimum, have a small group for your own youth. This could work effectively with as few as a half dozen youth meeting regularly at the home of a trusted adult couple.

With both youth and children's ministries the other idea to consider is whether your congregation can afford to hire someone, very part-time, to lead your “family ministries.” This is not as costly as you might imagine,

Continued on Page 19

and might be a position involving as few as eight to 10 hours per week. You might even find the ideal person to lead this ministry within your membership. My congregation has been incredibly blessed over the years hiring part-time lay professionals who are trusted, talented and active members of our congregation.

The small congregation: The solutions to this challenge are often similar to those suggested for congregations with an older median age. But ideas specific to this challenge include recognizing the advantages that come with being a smaller church. There are always people in any given community who, either because of their previous small-church background, or personality, actually *prefer* a smaller congregation. So while a smaller church cannot typically attract people through a wide range of ministry programs, you can attract new people through personal invitation and a strong sense of being a tight-knit, loving faith community. Remind your members that, more often than not, it's going to be a question of whether members *invite* friends and acquaintances to church. Another advantage for small churches: When visitors are present on a Sunday morning, you always know who they are. (Don't smother or embarrass them!) And be sure to always have Sunday morning refreshments.

Also with small churches, it's essential to be diligent when it comes to providing quality pastoral care for members and visitors. The smaller the congregation, the higher the expectations when it comes to pastoral care.

Even though your congregation is small, consider a new small group every year or two. Recruit three or four active members to organize it, then open it up to other members and non-members. If the pastor is full-time, he/she should also be teaching one or two group studies during the week in addition to a Sunday-morning class.

Denominational identity: With fewer Americans either knowledgeable about or concerned with the distinctions between denominations, be sure to stress your *Christian* identity over and above your *denominational* identity. Be careful — especially on Sunday morning — not to focus on topics or issues that would only make sense or be of interest to life-long church-going Lutherans. This also goes for the information you share in your congregational newsletter, on your website, or in any publicity you might put out there in your local community.

“Spirituality” vs. “religion:” The cynicism most people have regarding the institutional church is almost unlimited. Ask yourself to what degree your congregation comes across to the community as a typical, perhaps parochial church. Do you throw around acronyms — on Sunday morning and in your print communications — that only insiders would understand? What about theological terms only familiar to life-long, institutionalized Lutherans? Consider sermon/Sunday School-class topics that might resonate with those who are more drawn to “spiritual” matters than their stereotype of “religion.” Possible topics might include: “Developing a Personal Prayer Life”; “Why Are so Many Christians Hypocrites?”; “If God Is Loving and All-powerful, Why Is there so Much Suffering in the World?”; “How Do I Know What the Bible Says Is True?”; and/or “Does God Have a Plan for My Life?”

Other sermon ideas include a message on favorite hymns. Focus on the lyrics and then have the congregation sing the hymn as part of the sermon. Or conduct a Sunday-morning written survey during announcements (anonymous) where members will give you feedback that will be the basis for the following Sunday's message. Occasionally consider a sermon series for two or three Sundays in a row. If the first Sunday happens to be one of the better sermons of your life, attendance will probably be up for part two.

In conclusion, when it comes to smaller and/or older congregations in declining communities, this principle still applies: ***New Groups and Ministries for New People.*** The only difference between smaller and larger congregations with this principle is that the smaller the church, the fewer new groups and ministries you need. However, regardless of congregational size, new people and inactive members are far more likely to participate in a new group or ministry than a pre-existing one. For smaller churches this might only mean one new group or ministry each year. Just be sure to have shared leadership (a few people with a vested interest in seeing this succeed) and a deliberate strategy for inviting inactive members or unchurched friends to participate. And as for the *content* when this new group organizes? When in doubt, Bible study. (For a detailed article on small group ministries, refer to the January and February newsletter columns.)

Note: I am always interested in stories about ministries that have been particularly meaningful and/or effective in the life of your congregation. You can contact me at: DonB@oursaviorssalem.org.



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NALC reaches 200 congregation milestone

The North American Lutheran Church has reached the 200-congregation milestone.

The church body has been experiencing rapid growth since it was constituted Aug. 27, 2010. The NALC reached the 100-congregation milestone in January and the 200-church milestone in May.

Congregations have been voting to join the NALC almost every week. Many more churches are expected to vote to join the NALC in the coming months.

The NALC Executive Council has formally received 184 member congregations during the NALC's first eight months of existence.

At least 22 additional congregations have passed resolutions indicating their

intention to join the NALC upon completion of their departure from their current church body.

The total membership of NALC congregations is more than 84,000 people.

The NALC embodies the theological center of Lutheranism in North America. It is a church body committed to the authority of the Bible as the inspired Word of God and the authoritative source and norm of its proclamation, faith, and life.

The NALC is committed to shaping its life around four attributes: Christ-Centered, Mission-Driven, Traditionally-Grounded, and Congregationally-Focused.

A map and listing of NALC congregations is online at

www.thenalc.org. It is updated as new congregations are received.

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