

NALC News

North American Lutheran Church

August-September 2012

Convocation approves proposal to join Lutheran World Federation

Proposal must be ratified by NALC congregations

The Convocation of the North American Lutheran Church has voted to approve a resolution authorizing the NALC to apply for full membership in the Lutheran World Federation.

The resolution now goes to the NALC's 331 congregations for ratification. The proposal must be ratified by a two-thirds majority of NALC congregations. If the congregations vote to ratify the resolution, the NALC will forward its application for membership to the LWF for consideration.

The resolution was approved 241-118 by the Convocation which met Aug. 16-17 at Calvary Lutheran Church in Golden Valley, Minn. The vote was only a few votes more than the required two-thirds majority.

NALC Bishop John Bradosky expressed his pastoral concern about the close margin when he addressed the Convocation the morning after the decision.

"I want you to know that I was troubled by our vote last evening. There is little joy when something this significant in our life together passes by the narrowest of



More than 700 delegates and visitors gathered for the NALC Convocation at Calvary Lutheran Church in Golden Valley, Minn.

margins. There is no joy in the knowledge that nearly a third of our delegates opposed the resolution," Bishop Bradosky said.

"The delegates and our congregations will make the final decision about this matter. My sincere prayer is that you gather whatever information you need, pray fervently, seek the guidance of the Holy Spirit, and come to agreement that expresses a

more definitive response regarding this resolution so we move forward together with far greater unanimity," he said.

The Convocation also asked the Joint Commission on Theology and Doctrine to prepare a document to help congregations in their deliberations as a part of the ratification process.

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Congregations will decide if NALC joins LWF

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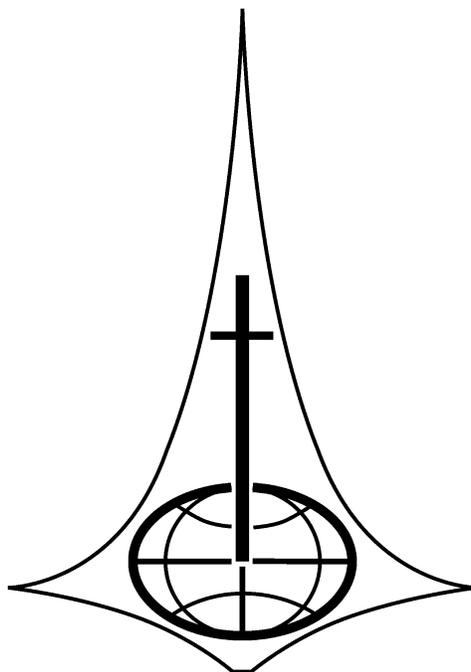
The Lutheran World Federation is “a global communion of Christian churches in the Lutheran tradition.” It includes church bodies in 79 countries. Ninety-five percent of the world’s 74 million Lutherans are members of the 143 church bodies that are members of the Lutheran World Federation.

The 2011 Convocation approved *An Initial Statement on the Ecumenical and Inter-Lutheran Commitment of The North American Lutheran Church*, which stated that the NALC would apply for membership in the LWF as a part of its commitment to relationships with other Christian churches.

In addition to noting the NALC’s commitment to ecumenical relationships, the resolution notes that encouragement from church leaders in Africa is a significant reason for the NALC to join the LWF.

“Our Lutheran brothers and sisters in Africa, especially in Ethiopia and Tanzania, desire the full membership of the NALC in the Lutheran World Federation to be an orthodox, confessional North American partner within LWF,” the resolution states.

Some NALC members have expressed concerns that because the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America and the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada are members of the LWF, the NALC would implicitly be in a formal relationship with those church bodies through the LWF.



**THE LUTHERAN
WORLD FEDERATION**
A Communion of Churches

However, the resolution sets forth the understandings on church-to-church fellowship with which the NALC would seek membership in the LWF: “Full membership within the Lutheran World Federation does not require, nor imply, altar and pulpit fellowship with all member Lutheran bodies. ... It is a present reality that certain member Lutheran bodies within the Lutheran World Federation understand themselves to be in imperfect communion with certain other member Lutheran bodies because of doctrinal differences.”

All NALC congregations will be receiving information to help their members in their deliberation on the proposal. Congregations have six months to vote on whether to ratify a decision by a Convocation. Information also will be available at www.thenalc.org.

Many people noted the importance of the congregational ratification process to the governance of the NALC and the gift that this process is when the church faces significant decisions.

“This is exactly why our constitution includes not just a Convocation vote, but congregational ratification,” said Pastor David Wendel, Assistant to the Bishop for Ministry and Ecumenism. “As a pastor in the NALC, I am so encouraged that now we enter into a time of congregational study and reflection that will lead us to a clear and defining sense of the will of the faithful in the NALC. Each and every person in our congregations will have the chance to participate in this decision-making process.”

“We are *congregationally-focused* and our ratification process proves that. It is not the Convocation, or the NALC staff, or our pastors who have all the authority and decision-making responsibility, but our members and congregations. I am pleased to be a part of such a church body,” he added.

“I trust the ratification process, I trust the faithfulness of our leaders and most of all I trust the work of the Holy Spirit among our people,” Bishop Bradosky said. “Sooner or later we have to test our structures by using them. If we wait until every decision is certain to pass, we make the ratification process a rubber stamp and prevent our congregations from engaging in legitimate deliberation.”

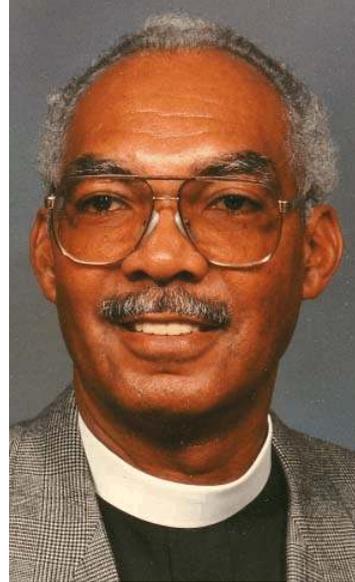
Hansen, Langford and Currey are reelected

Dr. James L. Hansen and Pastor Victor C. Langford III were reelected to the Executive Council of the North American Lutheran Church by the NALC Convocation which met Aug. 16-17 in Golden Valley, Minn.

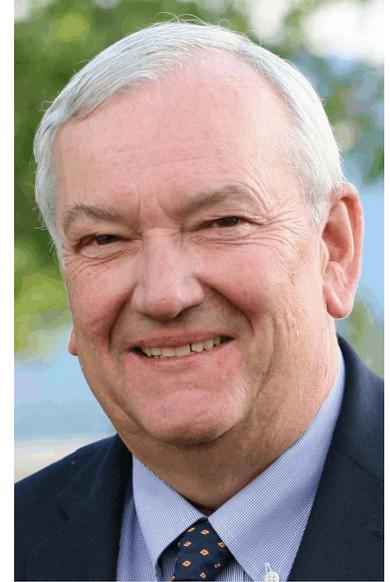


James L. Hansen

Dr. Hansen is a member of St. Timothy Lutheran Church in Charleston, W.Va. Pastor Langford serves St. Mark's Lutheran Church in Seattle, Wash.



Victor C. Langford



Richard F. Currey

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

The NALC's Convocation elects one pastor and one layperson to four-year terms on the Executive Council each year.

Richard F. Currey, a member of St. Luke's Lutheran Church in Colorado Springs, Colo., was elected to a four-year term on the NALC's Court of Adjudication.

The Court of Adjudication is available to decide appeals from disciplinary decisions and questions regarding the interpretation of the NALC's governing documents should such situations arise.

Convocation adopts 2013 budgets

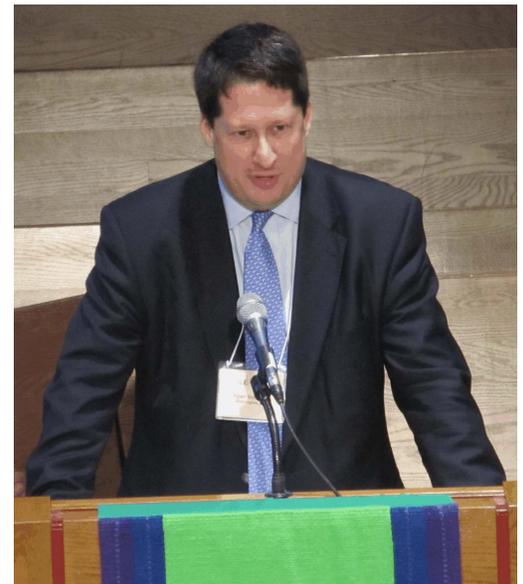
The 2012 NALC Convocation approved a \$1.3 million operating budget for the NALC and budgets for two of the church body's designated funds for 2013.

The Great Commission Fund budget is \$125,000, and the Fund for Theological Education budget is \$62,000. Individuals and congregations are welcome to give gifts to both funds.

Congregations are encouraged to give 5-8 percent of their offerings to the NALC. They are asked to support other ministries — including those specifically

recommended by the NALC — with the remainder of their benevolence giving.

The hope is that congregations will develop partnership relationships between their congregation and other ministries — both domestic and global — so that NALC members will build relationships with those ministries that will be about more than money. It is also hoped that those relationships will build NALC members' sense of mission and that relationships will be built between the other ministries and the congregation.



Ryan Schwarz
NALC Treasurer

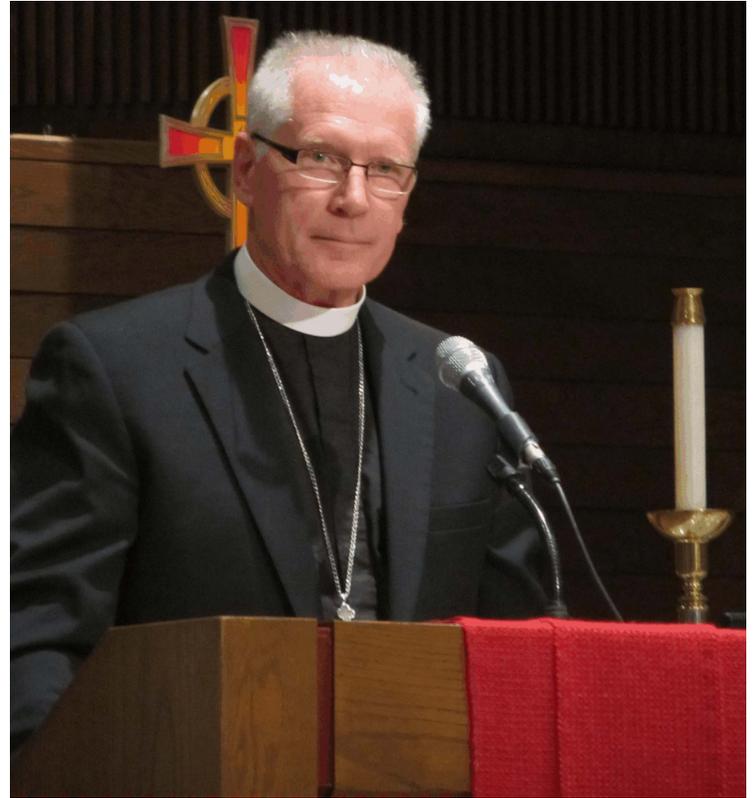
Bishop's comments after LWF vote

Here is the text of the comments made by NALC Bishop John Bradosky on Friday morning, Aug. 17, the day after the NALC Convocation voted to join the Lutheran World Federation.

I want you to know that I was troubled by our vote last evening. There is little joy when something this significant in our life together passes by the narrowest of margins. There is no joy in the knowledge that nearly a third of our delegates opposed the resolution. The term “no joy” is military code for “I’ve been unsuccessful.” Perhaps I have been unsuccessful in providing you with the information you needed. Perhaps I was unsuccessful in the process used to discuss the issues surrounding the resolution. Perhaps I was unsuccessful in determining if we were ready to make such a decision. As I mentioned in my report, I am certain to make many mistakes. For my failures, I can only ask for your forgiveness.

First, I want you to know that in our conversations with LWF we have been bold in telling them the truth regarding our relationship with the ELCA and would not say we were in altar and pulpit fellowship with them. While the NALC had not made any determination regarding such fellowship with other church bodies, should we be asked to do so, we would probably not consider ourselves to be in altar and pulpit fellowship with a number of other members of LWF. It was the NALC representatives that raised the issue of the requirements of the LWF constitution, asking the question if it was pointless to apply given our position. We were told that neither our position nor the reality of our severely compromised relationship with the ELCA would impede our application for membership. The LWF representative told us that altar and pulpit fellowship among all members was a goal but not reality. At no point did we ever try to hide the truth regarding our identity, our values, or the consequences resulting from the formation of the North American Lutheran Church, nor would we compromise our integrity for the sake of being perceived as politically correct.

Second, I want to be clear that this is not an agenda that your leadership is trying to push



Bishop John Bradosky

through without regard to the concerns raised by our delegates.

+ The consideration of this resolution is the result of the motion passed at our 2011 Convocation to pursue membership in the Lutheran World Federation. Your staff was following through on the motion passed by delegates the previous year.

+ Our staff asked for questions and provided the most accurate information available to us offering you copies of the most frequently asked questions and answers. We responded to every concern brought to our attention.

+ While I am certain the LWF does good work through its initiatives and ministries throughout the world, we are not aligned with many of their agendas and therefore could not support them. Some believe that the ELCA and those aligned with them are using the LWF as another platform to influence an even larger audience regarding their political agendas, resorting to bullying and power politics.

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+ Our participation in LWF would be for the purpose of supporting the good they are doing and aligning ourselves with other member churches who are trying to move LWF in a direction that is more consistent with the witness of Scripture and our confessional heritage. Nations in Africa, Asia, sectors of Europe as well as others are trying to gather support to do so. Some of those leaders have encouraged our membership and support for a change of direction in LWF. They believe an additional voice from the west through direct involvement would assist them in this struggle of moving LWF from being agenda-driven to being obedient to Jesus' command in the Great Commission and strengthening the church worldwide for the bold proclamation of the Gospel.

+ In our deliberations, we must pray for those working for these changes within LWF. They have paid dearly for their stand in the loss of support from member bodies with whom they disagree. In spite of this cost, yet they are bold enough to proclaim publicly that they will not be influenced by money, power, or political pressure.

+ We believe there is a chance for these member nations to succeed in changing that direction as these are the church bodies that are growing and becoming increasingly influential, while those currently setting the direction represent member church bodies that are shrinking or dying.

These are important discussion questions in our dialog:

1. Is it possible to join the LWF without compromising our faith, identity, values and integrity?
2. Is our participation a way to produce positive change within the LWF?
3. Is the effort of faithful Lutheran churches within LWF to change direction worthy of our support?
4. Is this effort an appropriate way to expand our witness to the world?
5. Is it better to have a place at the table and speak out in opposition or avoid the opportunity and forgo the chance for influence?

6. Is LWF involved in anything worthy of our support?

7. Is our participation a way to encourage others to boldly confess Christ?

I do not claim to have the answers to those questions. These are issues I believe our congregations will have to wrestle with, pray over, discern, and decide regarding the faithful response of the North American Lutheran Church. I trust in the work of the Holy Spirit and in our ability to make an appropriate decision.

For our mistakes there are remedies. We will attempt to provide more information and engage in meaningful dialog regarding the concerns individual leaders and congregations raise. The process is not completed yet. We continue to encourage discussion and prayerful deliberation. While some think we are not capable of wrestling with complex decisions like this one, I trust the ratification process, I trust the faithfulness of our leaders and most of all I trust the work of the Holy Spirit among our people. Sooner or later we have to test our structures by using them. If we wait until every decision is certain to pass, we make the ratification process a rubber stamp and prevent our congregations from engaging in legitimate deliberation.

For those reasons, if you do not approve this resolution in the ratification process, I will certainly understand, support you in that decision and help our partners to understand the concerns and issues that prevent us from partnering with them in LWF. On the other hand, if you decide to approve this resolution in the ratification process you have my commitment that no one representing the NALC will compromise our integrity, witness, or understanding of the authority of the Word of God as the norm for all matters of life and faith, our understanding of the Lutheran Confessions or the values that shape our life together.

This is your decision. It is not my decision or that of any member of our staff. The delegates and our congregations will make the final decision about this matter. My sincere prayer is that you gather whatever information you need, pray fervently, seek the guidance of the Holy Spirit and come to agreement that expresses a more definitive response regarding this resolution so we move forward together with far greater unanimity.

NALC Convocation

August 16-17, 2012

*Calvary Lutheran Church
Golden Valley, Minnesota*



A choir and brass choir enriched the worship of the Convocation.



Bishop John Bradosky installed NALC staff members.



Bishop Bradosky installed members of Executive Council.



Professor James Nestingen reports on his experiences as a NALC missionary professor teaching seminary in Ethiopia. His wife, Carolyn, looks on.



Bishop John Bradosky joined the worship team by playing drums for the closing worship.



Those at the NALC Convocation share in Holy Communion.



Pastor Karl Johnsen of Calvary Evangelical Lutheran Church in Edmonton, Alberta, provided some of the lighter moments of the Convocation as he encouraged people to attend the Canadian Rockies Theological Conference April 8-13 in Canmore, Alberta, "Braaten and Jenson Uncorked."



Pastor Mark Chavez, NALC General Secretary, and Bishop John Bradosky listen to a Convocation presentation.

Streaming videos of all sessions from the NALC Convocation and Theological Conference are available at www.thenalc.org.



Laurel Jones of Grace Lutheran Church in Huntington Beach, Calif., portrayed Katharina von Bora in a dramatic presentation called "Martin Luther Had a Wife."



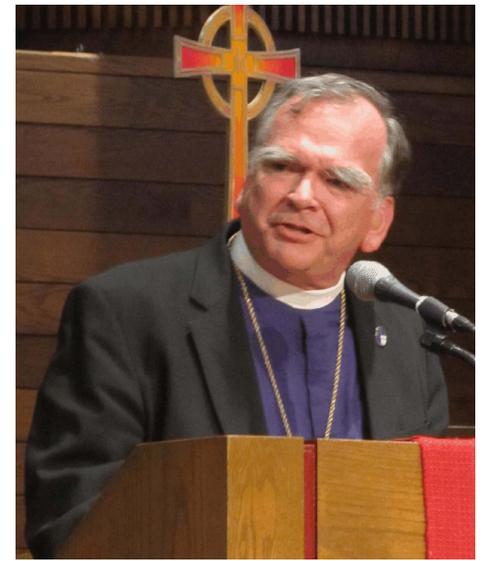
Pastors who were celebrating significant anniversaries of their ordinations were honored.



*Pastor Timothy Swenson
Augsburg Lutheran Churches*



*President Robert Bugbee
Lutheran Church—Canada*



*Archbishop Robert Duncan
Anglican Church in North America*



*The Rt. Rev. Edward L. Salmon Jr.
Dean of Nashotah House Theological Seminary*

Ecumenical Guests

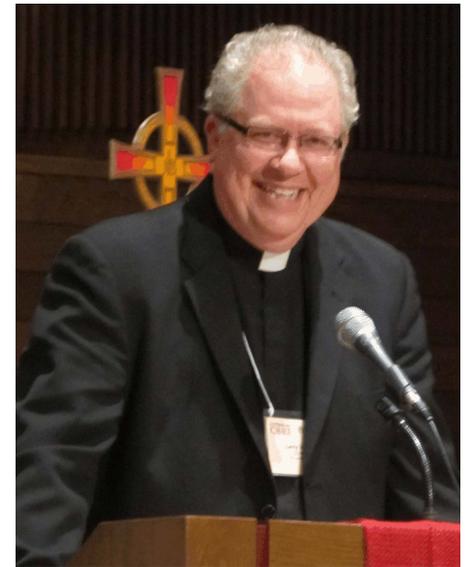
Guests representing other church bodies brought greetings to the NALC Convocation.



*Father James Erich Rutten
Roman Catholic Church
U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops*



*Pastor Kip Tyler
Lutheran Congregations in
Mission for Christ*



*Pastor Larry Vogel
Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod*

The NALC is mission-driven

Following are excerpts from the report to the Convocation by Pastor Gemechis D. Buba, Assistant to the Bishop for Missions. His entire report is available online at www.thenalc.org.

The North American Lutheran Church has four core values. One of those values is being *mission driven*. *Driven* is a dynamic word describing movement, activity, duty and mobility, and it describes our church — we are truly mission driven. We are centered in Christ, grounded in tradition, focused on congregations and driven with a very clear mission of making disciples of all nations.

The North American Lutheran Church fulfills its mission work through five major mission and ministry outlets: New Mission Plants, Renewal of Congregations, International Missions, Great Commission Society of the NALC, and Ethnic Ministry Strategies.

New Mission Plants

Planting and nurturing new mission congregations are central to the NALC mission office's work.

The main actors and drivers in planting new mission congregations in the NALC are our organized congregations, mission districts, visionary lay or ordained leaders, and groups that have self-organized for various reasons.

There are currently 54 mission congregations within the NALC, with a number in the pipeline yet to be approved and received into the NALC. There is a mission plan and a mission start projection to help our congregations multiply themselves by planting other mission-driven congregations.

Renewal of Congregations

As a *congregationally-focused* church we strongly believe that the renewal of congregations plays a key role in sustaining the mission of the whole church. Therefore, our congregational renewal team works on this vision by offering four avenues of congregational renewal: training; coaching and networking; renewal resources; and spiritual renewal.



*Pastor Gemechis Desta Buba
Assistant to the Bishop for Missions*

International Missions

The North American Lutheran Church is connected to churches and mission agencies in the United States, Canada and many other parts of the world. International mission connections are made through the offices of the NALC and through congregations which pursue global mission as one of their mission focal points.

The international mission work of the NALC mission office is assisted by the international mission team and is concentrated in seven major focus areas:

1. Sending missionaries: The NALC sends missionaries to various parts of the world using international mission agencies such as World Mission Prayer League and East European Mission Network. So far we have sent missionaries to Ecuador (Pastor Didi Panzo and family); Hungary (Pastor Scott Ryll and family); and Ethiopia (Dr. James and Carolyn Nestingen). Pastor Matthew Riak (and family) will be commissioned at this Convocation as a missionary to South Sudan. God

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willing, we will have another missionary going to the Middle East in the coming year.

Our missionaries depend on the support of our congregations; therefore we encourage congregations to directly support our missionaries in the mission field through their respective mission agencies.



Matthew Riak

2. International Scholarships: The most vital need many global ministries and churches share with us is their deep desire for missional capacity-building through training and leadership development, and having their students enrolled in orthodox, faithful and Bible-based seminaries is a great help. Currently, we are supporting an evangelist from Ethiopia (Belete Demessew Belay) who is enrolled in the Doctor of Ministry program at Trinity School for Ministry in Ambridge, Pa. There are similar desires and requests to help our brothers and sisters in Vietnam and South Sudan.

3. Mission agencies: The NALC mission office works closely with various mission agencies to accomplish most of our mission work. There are a number of international mission agencies approved to be mission partners of the NALC in advancing Christ's mission: World Mission Prayer League, East European Mission Network, and Friends of Madagascar Mission.

4. International Mission Collaborations and Visits: Our mission office works across borders to advance Christ's mission. We have hosted two international mission conferences with the Ethiopian Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. Both conferences were a great success and a blessing on both sides of the Atlantic. This collaboration with the EECMY will grow even further as we prepare to receive a delegation of evangelists to join us this fall during the congregational renewal conference in Columbus, Ohio, and at other events nationwide. In addition to that, we have a growing relationship with the Swedish Evangelical Mission. SEM is a mission

organization with Biblical stands and commitments to mission similar to those of the NALC.

5. International Mission Projects: Our mission office often receives requests for financial help with worthy mission projects. We do what we are able to help such projects succeed. In addition to financial help, we publicize projects throughout our church, thus supporting some of these projects through grants, consultations, visits, networking, publicity and other means.

Projects supported include sending medical equipment to Tanzania; helping the city of Hosanna, Ethiopia; helping mission work in India; assisting our missionaries accomplish their goals; helping victims of radical Islamic violence in Ethiopia (over \$65,000 was raised through the generosity of churches and individuals in the NALC, Lutheran CORE and LCMC); assisting a water drilling project in South Sudan; helping a mission post in Dubai; assisting university students' ministry in Ethiopia; training leaders for mission in partnership with the Swedish Evangelical Mission in Stockholm and Uppsala, Sweden.

6. Theologians without Borders: The NALC mission office receives requests for theologians, experienced pastors and gifted Bible teachers to take on short- and long-term commitments to assist our brothers and sisters in their seminaries, colleges and Bible schools. We are working on creating a ministry system called "Theologians Without Borders" to facilitate participation by theologians, pastors and Bible teachers in ministry opportunities that assist emerging and struggling churches around the world. There are exciting plans in motion in this area.

7. Global Prayer Network: One commitment we always have with our international partners is to pray for each other. Therefore our mission office is working on establishing a global prayer network to facilitate and create a platform by which churches can pray for each other intentionally and persistently. This task calls us to go beyond casual commitments to prayer. We plan to organize intercessory prayer teams to pray for leaders, missionaries, pastors, evangelists, lay leaders, children and every disciple in the body of Christ.

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8. Congregation-to-congregation matching:

It is the firm position and direction of the NALC since its formation that every congregation has at least one local and one global mission partner. Therefore we encourage congregations to take their own initiative to find connections or to seek the help of our office as needed to facilitate this mission-driven match. There are several congregations who are already enjoying the blessing of those connections.

Great Commission Society of the NALC

At last year's NALC Convocation, a vision for the Evangelical Lutheran Mission Society was unveiled. The focus of the mission society was making and mobilizing disciples to advance the work of Christ's great commission. Nearly 100 individuals and many congregations joined and supported this vision. We are deeply grateful. The society has raised considerable financial resources to support mission congregations, missionaries and various mission projects. In 2011, \$29,139 was raised. Through June, 2012 another \$14,538 had been raised. These gifts supplement the Great Commission Fund grants given through the NALC.

Contributions made to the society were truly a blessing to strengthen and advance mission work this year. So far we have given \$15,000 in mission grants. These grants are making great differences. In addition to mobilizing resources for mission, the leadership team spent time reflecting on the identity, purpose, structure and function of the society. Based on that work, ELMS was renamed *Great Commission Society of NALC (GCS)*. GCS continues to work with the same focus of *making and mobilizing disciples of Jesus*. The chairperson of this team, Mrs. Carolyn Nestingen, will give a brief report at the convocation. We are truly blessed with the leadership team. GCS aims to enlist and mobilize people and resources for domestic and global mission opportunities.



NALC Bishop John Bradosky and Charles Lindquist of the World Mission Prayer League commission Matthew Riak as a missionary to Sudan through the laying on of hands and prayer at the NALC Convocation.

Ethnic Ministry Strategies

We recognize the unique needs and nature of language-specific immigrant ministries. Therefore we have developed an ethnic ministry strategy team. An ethnic ministry plan is not something to be developed by the office; rather, it is formed by leaders of those communities, ministries already happening, and the common issues and shared ministry opportunities discovered by the group. The five dominant groups included are: *Hispanic*, led by Pastor Eddy Perez; *Oromo*, led by Evangelist Challa Baro; *Chinese/Asian*, led by Pastor Joshua Ong; *Sudanese*, led by Pastors Julius Badigo and Matthew Riak; and *Vietnamese*, led by Bishop Van Tran.

The NALC is already multicultural, multilingual and international. These traits will continue to grow further and stronger as we develop and implement our ethnic ministry strategy. Several NALC pastors and lay leaders are helping our immigrant ministries in multiple ways — serving as fiscal agents, hosts, mission partners, and as mentors, coaches and accountability partners. That is a great testament to those things we can do together.

We have it all in Christ

A Message from Bishop John Bradosky

Following is an excerpt from the sermon delivered by Bishop John Bradosky at the Communion service at the NALC Convocation.

After this many of His disciples turned back and no longer walked with Him. So Jesus said to the Twelve, "Do you want to go away as well?" Simon Peter answered Him, "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life, and we have believed, and have come to know, that you are the Holy One of God."

— John 6:66-69

The disciples remain because they know when Jesus called them to follow Him He did not offer them sensational experiences, material abundance, or a new set of laws. He did not offer them a superior theology, an innovative organization, a more integrated institution, a less complex worldview or a more pleasing pathway. Jesus offered them only one thing. He offered Himself.

The invitation is simple: come and follow me! He is the Gospel. He is the singular object of our faith. He is eternal life, and there is no life apart from Him. He is all there is. In Him the whole world holds together. This is the content of faith and the only source of salvation. He is who He claims to be — the way, the truth, and the life.

It is by following Jesus as His disciples that we grow in our faith, are involved in ministry that offers care and consolation to our neighbor. It is following Jesus that transforms our lives. It is following Jesus that becomes our witness. It is in following Jesus that we lead others to hear both Law and Gospel



Bishop John Bradosky presides at Holy Communion at the NALC Convocation.

and believe in Him, and through that faith to respond obediently as His disciples.

This is the heart of what it means to be *Mission-Driven* as the NALC — to fulfill the Great Commission by making disciples of all nations.

The Gospel we proclaim is Christ-Centered — for there is no faith apart from Him. He alone is the bread of life. The faithful transmission of this message through Word and Sacrament ministry is the legacy and heritage that has been passed on to us, not to simply embrace, but to share broadly. This is the focus for each congregation, and for all who lead, participate and share in this ministry that is the North American Lutheran Church.

Those who have been with us from the beginning have experienced the sensational, being a part of

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something new and exciting. After two years, we are not seeking new sensations. We are not in this to point to ourselves. We must remember that our focus is Christ — pointing to Christ, preaching Christ, following Christ. In Christ, we have it all.

Let me ask, then, why do we live as though we are starving, impoverished, and jealous of what the secular culture has? Instead of living as though we have the greatest abundance the world has ever known, we live as though we are victims of scarcity. We don't have enough and have been shortchanged. God owes us more, the culture owes us more, the world owes us more. It is easy to get stuck at the place where we keep saying this has been a tough journey, and we are still a persecuted remnant. Instead of lives overflowing with thanksgiving, we live in fear. Instead of trusting we live in doubt.

I tell you we cannot proclaim what we have not claimed as ours in Christ. We must lay claim to the fact that we have it all in Christ. We are not those who are starving, we are feasting at the banquet.

It is those who do not know Christ and have not believed in Him that are starving spiritually no matter how many staples line their shelves and fill their lives. Instead of wishing we were like them or had what they had, we should pity and pray for them. We are those who have resolved that we cannot be a part of a church body that compromises the Gospel for the sake of accommodating the world. That would only make us as spiritually famished as they are. Instead we live as those whose only mission is to lead these spiritually starving ones to the only bread of life, Jesus Christ.

One other word of caution, as we abandon the values of the world, be careful not to embrace the values of the religious culture around us. Some think that we won't be a legitimate church body until we have what other denominations around us have. It is easy, in this culture, to spend all our time and energy concerned about appearances, worried about what others will think of us. What is the advantage of imitating other denominations who fail to boldly proclaim Christ? We were discussing this in our last Executive Council meeting, and one of our leaders shared the story of a congregation who watched a larger congregation with many basketball

courts and a successful sports ministry decide that, if they were going to be as successful as their neighboring congregation, they must build basketball courts and so they did. The point is that preoccupation with what others are doing and attempting to duplicate their success makes them the focus of ministry instead of Christ.

Church, hear me in this: when you have faith in Christ, when you are following Christ, you have everything you need to accomplish the work God has called you to do — to proclaim Christ in word and deed until the entire world knows.

If God is going to use us for His redemptive purposes, we may have some of those other assets that other church bodies have but it will not be so we can be just like them. It will be because we need such assets to be equipped to boldly proclaim the Gospel and grow disciples until they are mature spiritual leaders in the church capable of discipling others. It is not your size, scope of ministry, your building or your budget that matters, it is only one thing — your faith in Christ.

At the death of our son, as I mourned what he never experienced, the things he would never know or do, the lost potential of the difference his life could have made, I heard the Gospel from a dear friend who said, when a person is in Christ their life is fulfilled in every moment of their existence. He reminded me that if we are in Christ, is there any other experience that surpasses it, is there any other knowledge that could make us wiser, is there any other relationship more meaningful, any other work more purposeful than faith in Him? He had it all and so do we!

To those faithful disciples, Jesus asked, "Do you want to leave me too?" They responded, "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life. We believe and know you are the Holy One of God." There is no other place to go except to Christ, no one else to believe in except Christ. We have it all, so may we proclaim Him with all we have and are. Every day in every ministry we seek to do nothing more than give away all we have — the bread of life. This is the only identity we seek — the substance of who we are as the North American Lutheran Church.

Thanks be to God! Amen.

Women of the NALC meet

The Women of the North American Lutheran Church met Aug. 15 at Calvary Lutheran Church in Golden Valley, Minn.

The day began with a Bible study, entitled “Pray without Ceasing,” led by Pastor Cathi Braasch. It was a wonderful way to start, as the women attending were asked to prayerfully consider many things that afternoon and evening.

Pastor Dave Keener challenged the women to look at their congregation’s and women’s ministries to find how God is leading their church in missions.

Pastor Steven King of Sola Publishing presented examples of excellent Bible study materials that can be used in your local church to study and share God’s Word. Check out possible Bible study material online at www.solapublishing.org.

The group prayerfully considered and adopted operational guidelines.

They also elected four members of their eight-person governing body, the Women’s Council. Lynn Coughenour (North Carolina); Darlene Deck (Indiana); Karen Hansen (Colorado) and Sherrie Palan (Texas) join Dorothy Johnson (North Carolina), Juhree Polkowski (New York), Jeanne Wallace (Texas), and Jan Williams (North Carolina) as members of the Women’s Council.

The council members are available to listen and connect to you and your women’s ministries as your fellow sisters in Christ.

The meeting of the WNALC was a wonderful time of fellowship and support. This is what the Women of the NALC is all about. We are here to pray with each other, console each other, uplift each other and share in studying God’s Word.



Members of the Women of the NALC Women’s Council are, from left, Sherrie Palan, Juhree Polkowski, Karen Hansen, Darlene Deck, Lynn Coughenour, Jan Williams, Dorothy Johnson, and Jeanne Wallace.

The speakers gave the women in attendance a wonderful challenge that we would like to extend to all the women of the NALC: Live a life of prayerful existence, where moments weave themselves in your prayer life instead of a life of moments interrupted by prayer. When you live your life in this way God will open up amazing and seemingly impossible opportunities for you/your family/your church to share the love of Christ with friend and neighbors.

Any women’s group of an NALC congregation or a woman who is a member of an NALC church may be a member of the Women of the NALC.

More information about the Women of the NALC is available on their website — www.wnalc.org — and their Facebook group page — Women of the NALC. These are opportunities to connect with each other, ask questions and join in conversations with other sisters in Christ. The Facebook page is a closed group, so you must ask to join.

Additional information on the gathering will be posted on the website and sent to each women’s ministry in the coming weeks. You are always welcome to contact us at info@wnalc.org with your questions or comments.

The 'Maturing' of the NALC

Ministry Matters

Hence I remind you to rekindle the gift of God that is within you through the laying on of my hands; for God did not give us a spirit of timidity, but a spirit of power and love and self-control. — 2 Timothy 1:6-7

Something interesting and important happened at our Convocation Aug. 16-17.

As a young Lutheran body, our recently ratified constitutional process of checks and balances was tested and has proven to be a solid and wise process that does indeed work — and will work to help us determine what is the will of the whole of the North American Lutheran Church. This ought not be overlooked and deserves to be acknowledged and lifted up as an important part of who we are as the NALC.

Certainly, some of us got worked up about the recommendation which came to the floor of the NALC Convocation regarding application for full membership in the Lutheran World Federation. Some felt strongly that we should apply for membership.

Some felt strongly that we are better off not applying. Some were well-prepared for the discussion. Some, not so much. The vote, when it came, was just over a two-thirds super majority that left most of us uncomfortable with that slim margin approving something so important.

However, there are several positive aspects of the process and the vote that should be mentioned as we de-brief our Convocation — aspects which reflect how we are “maturing” as the NALC.

First, this is exactly why our constitution includes not just a Convocation vote, but congregational ratification.

As a pastor in the NALC, I am so encouraged that now we enter into a time of congregational study and reflection that will lead us to a clear and defining sense of the will of the faithful in the NALC.



Pastor David Wendel

Assistant to the Bishop for Ministry and Ecumenism

Each and every person in our congregations will have the chance to participate in this decision-making process — and for this, I say, “Thanks be to God!”

This is the first time our congregations will have the opportunity and the responsibility to approve or not approve a major Convocation action on which there is some disagreement. If only we’d had such a process in place in our former Lutheran bodies!

We are *congregationally-focused* and our ratification process proves that. It is not the Convocation, or the NALC staff, or our pastors who have all the authority and decision-making responsibility, but our members and congregations. I am pleased to be a part of such a church body. I hope you are too.

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Second, through this process, we will begin to trust one another.

For obvious reasons, we have to learn to trust one another again. As in a marriage where there has been infidelity, our recent Lutheran experiences of the last decades have conditioned us not to trust the larger church body, the bishop and staff, the pastors, and the church-wide meetings. Now, we tend to look skeptically at anything and everything that happens, saying, “they pulled the wool over our eyes before, we won’t let them do it again.”

This is understandable. Jesus Himself cautions us saying, “Be wise as serpents and innocent as doves” (Matthew 10:16). It will take time, but we will learn to trust one another in the NALC. This trust will lead us to have open and honest conversations with one another as the NALC, allowing us to deal even with difficult, challenging decisions with a spirit of grace and love. This trust will help us to listen and to speak to one another without anger or suspicion, bearing with one another as brothers and sisters in Christ.

We will learn to approach our Convocations with this trust, not with apprehension. This 2012 Convocation was a defining moment for us as the NALC and will go a long way toward helping us regain and rebuild trust, regardless of the outcome of congregational ratification.

Third, we sincerely hope that all will see that we have as our only “agenda,” following the will of God — Father, Son and Holy Spirit — as understood by the pastors and congregations of the NALC.

As was expressed during the Convocation, the resolution regarding membership in the LWF came to the floor in fulfillment of the NALC constitution which affirms our commitment to ecumenical and inter-Lutheran relationships.

Our constitution states, “*The North American Lutheran Church shall participate in inter-Lutheran, ecumenical, and inter-religious relationships as a part of its ministry and mission. These relationships may vary from one another in character on a case-by-case basis*” (13.01).

All inter-Lutheran and ecumenical church-to-church relationships of an official character shall require the approval of two-thirds of the votes cast at a Convocation, and shall require ratification by congregations ... (13.04).

Our *Initial Statement on Ecumenism and Inter-Lutheran Relationships*, approved unanimously at last year’s Convocation, directed us to make application for full membership in the Lutheran World Federation. Our actions since that time have been in fulfillment of our constitution and the mandate given at last year’s Convocation.

Whether this resolution is ratified by congregations or not will express the will of the whole of the NALC. Our work and movement forward as staff will be on the basis of the results of this ratification process. We have no other agenda, other than fulfilling the will of the congregations of the NALC. This is why we are part of the NALC!

Fourth, this important role of the members and congregations of the NALC carries with it great responsibility.

It is not enough for pastors and delegates to the Convocation to come expecting to make an informed decision based on information provided in the brief time of discussion during deliberations.

Our congregational polity implies and requires that we read information and supporting materials that are provided beforehand and that every congregation, when necessary, hold information meetings, forums and special congregational meetings prior to and as part of the ratification process.

Sadly, our congregations and pastors have been conditioned to dismiss or ignore the workings of the larger church by structures that sidelined our congregations and located power and decision-making in the hands of a few.

This is not the case in the NALC. We need to learn what it means for our church body to be *congregationally-focused*. For this reason, as material and information is provided regarding LWF membership or any future actions requiring ratification, please involve and inform yourself as you prepare to vote.

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With regard to the LWF, please check out their website — www.lutheranworld.org — and informational materials. Please also look not only at the issues that we are concerned about, but look also at the good and faithful work that LWF members are able to do, through joint cooperation as Lutherans.

Certainly, there is cause for concern regarding the direction of the LWF. At the same time, without a doubt, there is much that is being done to care for those in need around the world which can be done better through cooperation, rather than as individual Lutheran bodies.

Fifth and finally, it is worth echoing the spirit of the pastoral words of our bishop on the morning after the vote.

While I paraphrase, he assured us that we will never compromise the Gospel, nor will we minimize our commitment to the truth of God's Word!

It seems to me St. Paul was saying much the same thing to Timothy in the verse quoted above. Paul was encouraging Timothy to witness, not from a spirit of timidity, but with a spirit of power and love and self-control. In the same way, we must not be hesitant to engage other Lutherans and other Christians because we are afraid or timid in any way. Rather, we must be bold in our engagements,

always ready to make our witness in a spirit of power, love and yes, self-control.

I was blessed by the words of our brother, Pastor Larry Vogel, representing the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, when he said, "If you hear nothing else from me, know that you have earned the respect of the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod."

It is useful for us to remember that as we have stood firmly on the Word of God, we will continue to do so in whatever ecumenical and inter-Lutheran encounters we find ourselves. We did not come this far to be bullied or patronized or ignored by any Lutheran body or federation of bodies.

We will stand for the unwavering, unchanging Word of God in every place, every situation, every opportunity we are given.

Because we are committed to the truth of God's Word, our involvement in world Lutheranism is important and essential — however we choose to be involved and engaged. Let us witness and make our testimony everywhere we can with a spirit of power, love and self-control!

And let us give thanks to God the Father and our Lord Jesus Christ for leading us into the North American Lutheran Church — a body that is truly *Christ-centered* while also *congregationally-focused!*

'Pastoral Praxis for Life' conference

"Pastoral Praxis for Life" is the theme of a pastoral-theological conference Sept. 11 at Beeson Divinity School of Samford University, in Birmingham, Ala.

The conference is hosted by the National Pro-Life Religious Council, a coalition which acknowledges Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior and is called to affirm and witness to the Biblical standard of the dignity and sanctity of every human life.

Dr. Dennis DiMauro, a NALC pastoral candidate serving Trinity Lutheran Church in Gainesville, Va., is a featured speaker, representing Lutherans for Life. His address is entitled, "Kingly Ministry: Embodying the Gospel of Life as a Christian and as a Church."

"The conference will follow through on the claims of 'The Manhattan Declaration' and focus on ways in which the Church can become a more faithful witness for life," organizers explain.

Speakers are featured from organizations which make up the National Pro-Life Religious Council including Dr. Timothy George, dean of Beeson Divinity School; the Rev. Frank Pavone, president of the National Pro-Life Religious Council and director of Priests for Life; and Georgette Forney, president of Anglicans for Life.

More information on the conference or the NPRC is available online at www.nprcouncil.org.



Pictured, from left, are the Rev. Dr. Michael S. Horton, the Rev. Dr. Carl E. Braaten, the Rev. Dr. Steven D. Paulson, and the Rev. Dr. Jared Wicks.



The Rev. Dr. Amy Schifrin

Theological Conference

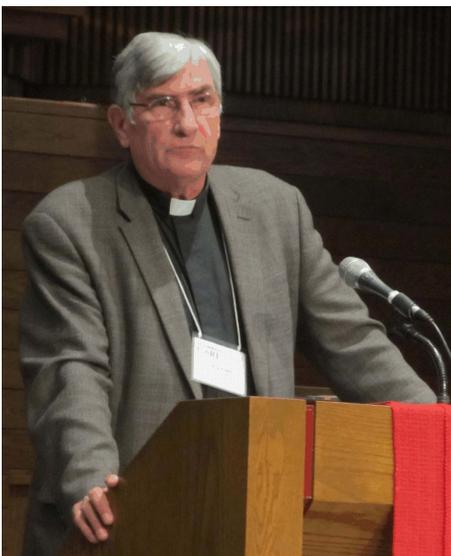


The Rev. Dr. Piotr Malysz

*Preaching
and
Teaching
the Law
and
Gospel
of God*



More than 600 people attended the theological conference sponsored by Lutheran CORE and the NALC.



The Rev. Dr. J. Larry Yoder



Dr. Stephen Westerholm



The Rev. Dr. Paul R. Hinlicky

Lutheran CORE gathers for Convocation

More than 350 people gathered for the Lutheran CORE Convocation Aug. 14 at Calvary Lutheran Church in Golden Valley, Minn. Lutheran CORE seeks to support Lutherans in North America — regardless of church body affiliation — by mobilizing them for evangelical renewal.

The Convocation elected leaders to two-year terms. Pastor Paul Ulring of Columbus, Ohio, was re-elected as Moderator. Pastor Cathy Ammlung of Sykesville, Md., was elected secretary.

The Convocation also elected four members of the Lutheran CORE Steering Committee: Pastor Wendy Berthelsen, Cedar Hill, Texas; Rod Hackman, Charleston, W.Va.; Pastor Karl Johnsen,



Dr. Robert Benne (above) and Pastor Gemechis Buba were keynote speakers for the Lutheran CORE Convocation.



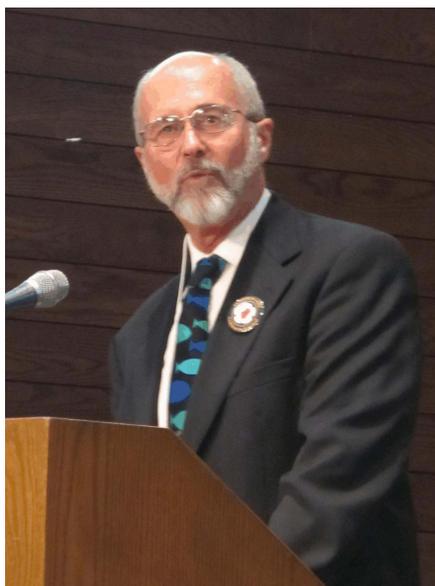
Edmonton, Alberta; and Pastor Eddy Perez, Miami, Fla.

Featured speakers were Pastor Gemechis Buba, NALC Assistant to the Bishop for Missions; Dr. Robert Benne, Roanoke College; and Pastor Kip Tyler, chair of the Board of Directors of Lutheran Congregations in Mission for Christ.

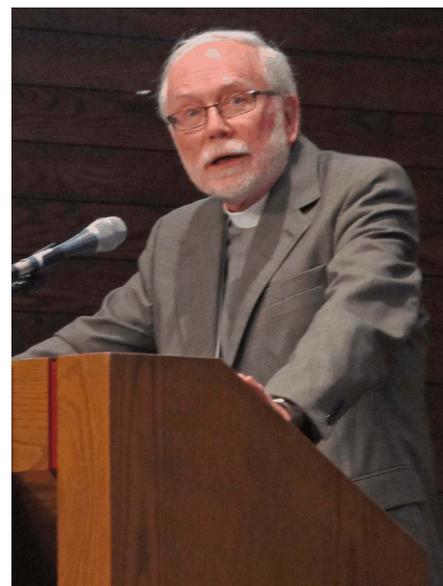
Several workshops on areas of congregational ministry were also offered.



*Lynn Kickingbird
Chair of Lutheran CORE*



*Pastor Steve Shipman
Director of Lutheran CORE*



*Pastor Paul Ulring
Moderator of Lutheran CORE*

Lutheran Family Matters

Pastor Scott Grorud of Faith Lutheran Church in Hutchinson, Minn., was asked to describe what differentiates the North American Lutheran Church, Lutheran Congregations in Mission for Christ, and the Augustana District of LCMC. This article is being published in both the NALC News and the newsletter of the Augustana District.

The Augustana District Council has appointed Pastor Grorud to the position of “NALC Liaison.” The purpose of this position is to provide a point of contact between the NALC and the Augustana District for purposes primarily of communication and, where feasible, cooperation.

By Pastor Scott Grorud

In 1999, the ecumenical agreement *Called to Common Mission* (CCM) mandated the adoption of the historic episcopate and ordination of pastors by bishops in the ELCA. Many Lutherans, especially those in the WordAlone Network, wondered how Lutherans could accept changes that were so foreign to the Lutheran Confessions.

When Lutheran Congregations in Mission for Christ (LCMC) formed in 2000, it adopted a distinctly congregational structure. A bare minimum of central organization left nearly all authority, including accountability of pastors and churches, to its member



Pastor Scott Grorud

congregations. Many Lutherans, especially those who had not opposed CCM, wondered how a Christian church could operate without the Biblical office of oversight.

In 2010, the North American Lutheran Church (NALC) formed. Many Lutherans, especially those in LCMC, wondered why yet another new Lutheran denomination was needed, especially one that included an office of bishop (albeit without the language or practice of the historic episcopate).

Also in 2010, the Augustana District of LCMC (AD) was established. It maintains the congregational structure of LCMC, but offers theological oversight and congregational services that more resemble the

NALC. Lutherans on all sides have wondered what kind of hybrid AD actually is.

Why all this confusion? It arises from an old, deep, yet largely hidden divide among Lutherans over ecclesiology, the definition and understanding of the Church. To casual observers, the disagreement does not seem that significant, but Lutheran pastors and theologians have been unable to resolve it.

One way to understand the difference — admittedly too simplistic — is to consider which articles of the Augsburg Confession each group tends to emphasize in its ecclesiology. (Please note, these are *tendencies* and *emphases*. LCMC and NALC both clearly subscribe to the whole of Augsburg. The following distinction is simply one effort to illustrate a key difference between them.)

In ecclesiology, LCMC (and its ancestors) leans heavily on Articles V and VII. Article V upholds the “Office of Preaching” as the means God instituted to give saving faith through Word and Sacrament. That leads to Article VII, which defines the church as “the assembly of all believers among whom the gospel is purely preached and the holy sacraments are administered according to the gospel.”

On this basis, LCMC sees the congregation as the defining unit

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of the Church and the place where churchly authority resides. It is concerned that any hierarchical structure — especially involving the ancient, but sometimes problematic title of bishop — moves churchly authority away from that local assembly where God does His saving work.

NALC (and its ancestors) does not disagree, but is quick to add Articles XIV and XXVIII to the discussion. Article XIV declares that “no one should publicly teach, preach or administer the sacraments without a proper call,” so NALC sees the office of ministry (not the person of the pastor) as an essential conduit for the preaching of the Word and the administration of the sacraments.

Article XXVIII lays out an evangelical understanding of the office of oversight (*episkopos*= bishop). For the NALC, such oversight is necessary for the Church to operate effectively and faithfully. Though devoted to serving the local congregation, the offices of ministry and bishop exist beyond it and serve the whole Church. Likewise, all denominations are part of the wider Christian Church, which makes church-to-church relations vitally important.



Where does the Augustana District of LCMC fit in all of this? Theologically, its ecclesiology is rooted in Articles V and VII of the Augsburg Confession. It holds that the Church is defined by God at work through Word and sacrament in the assembly of believers. Christ has direct authority over this work and no human authority can be placed between them. This does not denigrate the public office of ministry, but sees it as a function of good order in the church, rather than an office with its own ontology.

Practically, however, the AD recognizes that churches do not exist as islands, any more than individual believers do. Again for the sake of good order, it is vital for them intentionally to share resources, consult with one another, work together in missions and provide pastors for churches.

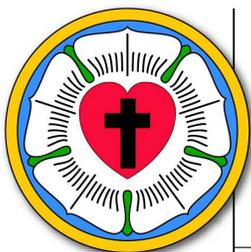
Thus, the AD has boards for world and domestic missions, ministry and theological education, and congregational services. It offers a theological

endorsement of pastors and assists local churches with the call process. Yet, it does so in the conviction that the Church — the Body of Christ — is located solely in those assemblies of believers where sinners hear the Word and receive the sacraments.

We in the Augustana District hold no illusions that the ecclesiological divide among Lutherans will be resolved any time soon. We do hope, however, that the AD might serve as a bridge between LCMC and NALC, representing the ecclesiology of one and the practical structure of the other. To that end, the Augustana District has asked this writer to serve as a liaison to the NALC. This role will represent AD *only*, not LCMC as a whole, and the goal is simply to have one contact point between these close Lutheran cousins.

Above all, we hope that the real differences among us, ecclesiological or otherwise, might not be a barrier to mutual understanding and common mission — especially global mission — as we seek to serve faithfully in today's changed Lutheran landscape.

You can learn more about the Augustana District at www.augustanadistrict.org and about LCMC at www.lcmc.net.



NALC

North American Lutheran Church

Second meeting held between Missouri Synod Lutherans and North American Lutheran Church

Representatives of the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, the North American Lutheran Church and Lutheran Church—Canada met in Hilliard, Ohio, July 19-20 at the NALC offices.

At the meeting, the NALC was represented by Bishop John Bradosky; Emeritus Bishop Paull Spring; Dr. James Nestingen, retired seminary professor; Rev. David Wendel, NALC Assistant to the Bishop for Ministry and Ecumenism; and Rev. Mark Chavez, NALC General Secretary.

LCMS representatives were Dr. Albert B. Collver III, director of Church Relations and assistant to the LCMS President; Rev. John Pless, director of field education and assistant professor in Pastoral Ministry and Missions at Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne, Ind.; and Dr. Joel D. Lehenbauer, executive director of the LCMS Commission on Theology and Church Relations. President Robert Bugbee of the Lutheran Church—Canada attended as a formal observer.

One of the main focuses of the meeting was discussion of areas of practical cooperation, such as the Lutheran Malaria Initiative and disaster relief. The church bodies gave an update on recent developments within their churches.

The group discussed a working agreement on Inter-Lutheran Consultation and agreed on a draft to be presented at the next meeting scheduled for



Participants in the LCMS-NALC meeting were, from left, front row: Bishop John Bradosky, Dr. James Nestingen, Prof. John Pless, Dr. Joel Lehenbauer, Pastor David Wendel; back row: Dr. Albert Collver, Pastor Mark Chavez, Bishop Paull Spring, and President Robert Bugbee

December 2012. The draft identifies the goal of the consultation: “to consider ways by which our churches may work together to make Christ known, and to strengthen the Lutheran witness by word and deed in the church and community.” The draft also proposes that Lutheran Church—Canada be a full participant in the consultation.

Plans were made for a series of five dialogues to be held over the next few years. The December 2012 meeting to be held at Concordia Theological Seminary Fort Wayne will focus on the relationship between the Gospel and the Scriptures.

Relief and Disaster Ministries

Lutheran congregations in North America are asking for recommendations for ministries that specialize in relief and disaster work, internationally and locally. They are looking for trustworthy ministries that do good work in times of need and do so in the name of Jesus Christ. We are blessed with some Lutheran ministries in North America that serve effectively and faithfully.

Congregations in the United States who want to support international relief can connect with Lutheran World Relief (lwr.org). Congregations in Canada have Canadian Lutheran World Relief (clwr.org). Both organizations are pan-Lutheran. They provide emergency relief, economic, agricultural and community development and other services in many countries around the world. They have a good track record of dealing with the root causes of poverty so their ministries are continuously effective, not just in times of emergencies.

Lutheran World Relief works with the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (LCMS) in the Lutheran Malaria Initiative (LMI), which is mobilizing Lutherans in the United States in support of an international effort to end one million malaria deaths

annually in Africa. LMI “works through local partners to educate families on malaria, increase access to treatment, and provide prevention tools such as bed nets.”

For domestic relief in the United States, the North American Lutheran Church is working with Disaster Services of Lutheran Social Services of Central Ohio. Mary Woodward, who heads that office, has been a pioneer in improving rapid and effective response to domestic disasters. She developed a training program for congregations so that they know before a disaster happens how they can quickly join the relief effort. She also developed a trailer mounted mobile shower system, with multiple showers, that operates off a simple garden hose connection.

The NALC will be coordinating its work with Mary Woodward in cooperation with LCMS World Relief and Human Care and its disaster response ministry. The coordination will include relief efforts after a disaster and training programs for congregations so that they know what to do before a disaster occurs in their community. Look for more information in the coming months about the training programs.

Gemechis Desta Buba, Assistant to the Bishop for Missions, and his wife, Nassisse Baro Tumsa, celebrated the birth of their daughter, Debbie, on July 22.

Debbie means “answer to prayer” in their native Oromo language from Ethiopia.

Her brother, Labsi, joined their parents in celebrating her as a gracious gift of God.



The Words of Institution

By Pastor Michael G. Tavella

*The body of Christ, given for you.
The blood of Christ, shed for you.*

Every time we hear these words at the reception of Holy Communion, we are reminded of the sacrifice of Christ on the cross for our salvation. On the night before His death, Jesus gathered the disciples in “a large upper room furnished and ready” (Mark 14:15 ESV). During the Passover meal, Jesus gave new meaning to bread and cup shared by the whole company. He took bread, blessed it, broke it, and gave it to his disciples, having performed the same actions at the feeding of the five thousand earlier in the Gospel as He did on that night. At the Last Supper, our Lord identified His body with the bread He blessed. He identified the cup with His outpoured blood.

What we call the Words of Institution are found in variant forms in Matthew, Mark, Luke, and Paul’s First Letter to the Corinthians, the earliest written record of Jesus’ last meal with the disciples. Neither of the two forms of the Words of Institution cited in the Eucharistic Prayers of *Lutheran Book of Worship* are exact renderings of any forms of the words in the New Testament.

The Apostle Paul quotes the Words of Institution in the context of giving instruction to the church at Corinth about their unfaithful practice of the Lord’s Supper. The Eucharist was then celebrated in the context of a full meal. Members brought food and drink with them to church. The congregation was beset by division. Some members showed disregard for brothers and sisters attending the meal by eating while others went hungry. Those who had much did not share. Some got drunk!

After criticizing the Corinthians for their behavior, Paul cites the central actions and words of Jesus at the Last Supper with the apostles. Apparently Paul drew these words from the tradition, what he calls “receiving from the Lord.” Christ takes the bread and declares that it is His body “for you.” He instructs the disciples to “Do this in remembrance of

me.” He tells them that the cup is the New Covenant, established by the shedding of His blood.

Paul continues by saying that the Eucharist is a proclamation of Christ’s death until He comes. In the Words of Institution in the synoptic Gospels, Jesus Himself refers to His return. “I tell you I will not drink again of this fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father’s kingdom” (Matthew 26:29 ESV). These words embody the eschatological message of Jesus. This end time theme is found in the Eucharistic Prayers of the Church. Note the *anamnesis* in one of the Eucharistic Prayers provided by the *Lutheran Book of Worship*, “...believing the witness of His resurrection, we await His coming in power to share with us the great and promised feast.” The congregation then responds, “Amen. Come, Lord Jesus.”

In his liturgical reforms of the Mass, Martin Luther excised the old Roman Canon (Eucharistic Prayer) and suggested the use of the Words of Institution alone. Until recently, the use of the Words of Institution alone has been typical Lutheran practice. The Reformer’s objection to the Roman Canon was that it was heavy laden with the sacrificial language of works righteousness. Luther stood for a sacramental view of Holy Communion as opposed to a sacrificial one. The Sacrament communicates the grace of God through His Word and physical signs to all who believe. At the center of the Lutheran Reformation was the restoration of the doctrine of justification to a central place in the teaching of the Church. Luther applied this central teaching to the Sacrament.

For Luther, it was crucial to maintain the doctrine of Real Presence in the Sacrament. For him and the evangelical movement, “This is my body” means just that. Against Ulrich Zwingli and others, Luther repudiated the idea that “This is my body” means “This represents my body” or “This signifies my body.” When we receive the Sacrament both the mouth and the heart partake of Christ. In *The Small Catechism*, Luther writes that we receive the body

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and blood of Christ with bread and wine. This is the sacramental union of bread and body and wine and blood. He also writes that, along with eating and drinking, we who believe are granted forgiveness of sins. Where there is forgiveness of sins, there is life and salvation. Those who do not believe that forgiveness is given in the Sacrament of the Altar are not worthy to receive it.

We receive the body and blood of Christ orally and aurally (by hearing). The physical elements — bread and wine — plus the Word make the Sacrament. When we confess that Christ is really present, we mean that we believe that He comes to us in His glorified body to feed us in body and soul. In defense of the Real Presence, Luther insisted that Christ is not confined to a local heaven, but is omnipresent.

The shedding of Christ's blood establishes a New Covenant, promised in the Old Testament, and realized in Christ. We, the people of the New Covenant, are fed throughout our pilgrimage with the Eucharist. The Sacrament received just before death is called *Viaticum* — Latin for "provision for the journey" — from the word, *Via*, meaning road, way, or journey. It provides the dying person sustenance as he or she is about to journey from death to life.

The Eucharistic meal is grounded in the death of Christ; for, as Paul says, in Communion we proclaim the Lord's death until He returns. The resurrection of Christ is also central to the meal. At Emmaus, the risen Christ appears to two disciples and breaks bread with them. Here again four verbs describe the action of the Last Supper. *Took, blessed, broke, and gave* are the action words of Holy Communion.

The question may be asked then, why do we need a Eucharistic Prayer if the Words of Institution say it all? Only these Words are necessary for celebrating the Supper according to Christ's institution. But there are good reasons not to neglect providing Eucharistic Prayers in our worship books along with the Words of Institution alone:

+ The Eucharistic Prayer reflects the consensus of the Christian Church through the ages.

+ Luther's objection to the Roman Canon was its sacrificial language of works righteousness. Lutheran Eucharistic Prayers are careful to avoid non-evangelical notions of sacrifice.

+ Eucharistic Prayers include a recital of the history of salvation. Some prayers have lengthy post-Sanctus narratives of God's righteous deeds beginning with creation.

+ Jesus' own words at the Supper were set in the context of prayer.

+ The Eucharistic Prayer elaborates the themes of praise and thanksgiving, real presence, eschatology, and remembrance, all fundamental to Christian belief.

+ The Eucharistic Prayer is an excellent rendering of our Trinitarian faith. In the prayer we address the Father through the Son in the unity of the Holy Spirit.

In the Eucharistic Prayers, the Words of Institution are at the end of a narrative of God's deeds in history that refers to our Lord's death or His fulfillment of His mission of salvation. In one of the Prayers in LBW, beginning "Holy God, mighty Lord, gracious Father," the Words of Institution come after a reference to Christ's death. Christ was "... obedient to Your will, even to giving His life." They emphasize the redemptive significance of Christ's death on the cross.

The Words of Institution are the core of our Eucharistic celebration. They give us a brief account of the Last Supper and are the words of proclamation connected with the signs of bread and wine. In the Eucharist, Christ gives what He promises: His very body and blood for us to receive in faith for the forgiveness of sins, life, and salvation. The Sacrament of the Altar is God's gift to us through Jesus Christ, our Lord.

Next month, we will discuss the Holy Trinity in the Eucharist.

Pastor Michael G. Tavella serves Holy Trinity Evangelical Lutheran Church in Abington, Pa. He writes this monthly column on worship. You may contact him with comments or suggestions at MGTavella@msn.com.

Addressing the tension between *style* and *content* in congregational outreach

In Pursuit of the Great Commission

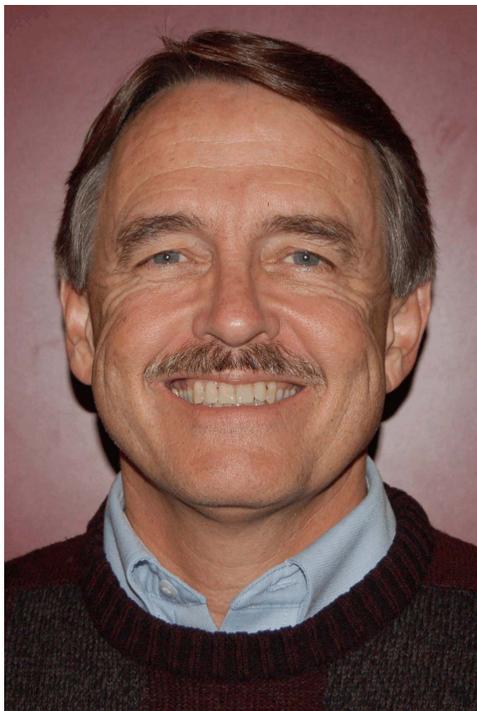
By Pastor Don Brandt

One of the most challenging aspects of congregational outreach is considering the relative importance of our ministry *method* and/or *style* on one hand, while insuring that we not compromise the *content* of the Gospel we proclaim.

As we all know, our style can undermine or misrepresent our message. So even when our motives are appropriate — as when we are being innovative and creative in our pursuit of the Great Commission — our methodology can nevertheless potentially misrepresent the faith.

However, in writing this to a largely Lutheran audience, I sense I'm "preaching to the choir" when I say this. Every denominational tradition has its blind spots, and Lutherans are no exception. However, in our case I'm convinced we are more likely to *disregard* innovation and use our concern over compromising the Gospel as a cover for our unwillingness to take risks in ministry planning.

I came of age as part of what author Lyle Schaller once described as the "Southern California Religious Subculture." Living in Southern California in the 1960s and 1970s, I was personally (and I might add, positively) impacted by evangelical, nondenominational



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Protestant groups that were a part of the Jesus Movement.

Many Christian movements had their roots in this Jesus Movement. And this movement, in large part, came out of this part of the country. (I know it's a little scary when a religious movement traces its roots to southern California.)

The list of Jesus Movement ministries coming out of California would include the Calvary Chapel congregations, the Vineyard Fellowship churches, and a number of mainline charismatic movements.

Still today we see cross-denominational ministry models that, in part, had their origins

among such evangelical Protestant groups.

Contemporary worship music, for example, largely originated from such groups and ministries. In addition, the small-groups movement and many models for youth ministry have some of their origins in the Jesus Movement "subculture."

I've written before of the recent struggles of both mainline and evangelical churches when it comes to reaching the unchurched. The last few years have seen accelerated decline among mainline denominations. And, for the first time in my lifetime, we are seeing many evangelical movements experiencing increased difficulty when it comes to achieving growth. Secularism is on the rise in North American culture, and just about all Christian church bodies are being impacted.

But be careful as you digest these trends. Generally speaking, evangelical congregations are still doing a far more effective job in reaching the unchurched than mainline Protestant churches. Two of the primary reasons for this: First, evangelical Protestants have simply placed a greater emphasis on evangelistic outreach, and second, they tend to be more innovative in their ministry practices.

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Now as I've already stated, methodology *can* compromise and distort our message. And when considering ministry strategies and models originating in the evangelical subculture, we need to be cautious. The two most common heresies that sometimes characterize evangelical congregations are either legalistic fundamentalism or the prosperity gospel. However, I'm confident most Lutheran pastors have a more than adequate theological education and can discern when either of these false teachings is present.

Here's the hard truth: When it comes to effective, transferable ministry models for evangelistic outreach, there isn't much available from within the Lutheran subculture.

(There is at least one notable exception: Group Ministries out of Loveland, Colo., was launched and is owned by Lutherans. Groups focuses on resources for children's and youth ministries. Group is probably the largest provider of children's ministry resources in the country cross-denominationally.)

So test the waters! Explore what's happening in the evangelical Protestant subculture. Check out reputable ministries like Willow Creek, Saddleback Resources, Youth Specialties, Zondervan Publishing, Integrity Music, NavPress, etc.

As long as you factor in those ministry models which (too often) assume a large-church ministry context, you might discover ideas and strategies that will help your congregation reach more people

in your community. And one more suggestion: Be in touch with some of the evangelical parish pastors in your local area. Discover what they're finding helpful when it comes to ministry resources.

The Lutheran CORE website has a list of ministry resources. This list includes not only Lutheran sources, but also non-denominational ministry providers and parachurch organizations. You will find this list by clicking on "resources," and then "Links and Literature." Also, for confessional Lutheran ministry resources check out the Sola Publishing website.

Pastor Don Brandt serves as pastor of Our Savior's Lutheran Church in Salem, Ore. You may reach him at DonB@oursaviorssalem.org.

Congregational Renewal Conference will be Nov. 7-9 in Hilliard, Ohio

"Authentic Discipleship for Congregational Renewal and Growth" is the theme of the NALC's Congregational Renewal Conference Nov. 7-9 at Upper Arlington Lutheran Church in Hilliard, Ohio.

Speakers include NALC Bishop John Bradosky and Professor James Nestingen. Also featured will be Pastor Yonas Yigezu, Director of the Mission and Theology Department of the Ethiopian Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus and other evangelists from the EECMY.

Breakout sessions include:

+ Prayer for Church Renewal and Revival - Pastor Dave Keener.

+ Family and Youth Ministries - Pastor Scott Ness.

+ Congregational Stewardship - Pastor David Wendel.

+ Mobilizing Disciples for Outreach.

+ Small Group Discipleship - Pastor Ray Scheck and Valerie Hobbs.

Registration is \$100 for individuals or \$75 per person for teams of three or more. Space is limited to 175 people.

To register or for more information, contact Rachel Sosebee in the NALC missions office at rsosebee@thenalc.org or 614-777-5709.

Videos of Convocations and Theological Conference are online

Streaming videos of all sessions of the Convocation of the North American Lutheran Church, the Theological Conference, and the Lutheran CORE Convocation are available online at www.thenalc.org.

The NALC Convocation was attended by more than 700 delegates and visitors. The Theological Conference attracted more than 600 people.

The online videos will allow those who were not able to attend to experience the events and those who were able to attend to relive the experience.



NALC Contact Information

NALC Main Office

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

Bishop

Bishop John Bradosky
jbradosky@thenalc.org

Missions

Pastor Gemechis Buba
gbuba@thenalc.org

Ministry & Ecumenism

Pastor David Wendel
dwendel@thenalc.org

NALC Financial Administration

2299 Palmer Drive, Suite 220
New Brighton, MN 55112
651-633-6004 or 888-551-7254
nalc.mnoffice@thenalc.org

General Secretary

Pastor Mark Chavez
295 Stony Battery Road
Landisville, PA 17538
717-898-0801
mchavez@thenalc.org

**Please send donations to the
Financial Administration office
in New Brighton, Minn.**

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3500 Mill Run Drive
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Phone: 614-777-5709

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

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