

NALC News

North American Lutheran Church

June 2012

NALC to consider membership in Lutheran World Federation

The 2012 Convocation of the North American Lutheran Church will consider a proposal for the NALC to join the Lutheran World Federation.

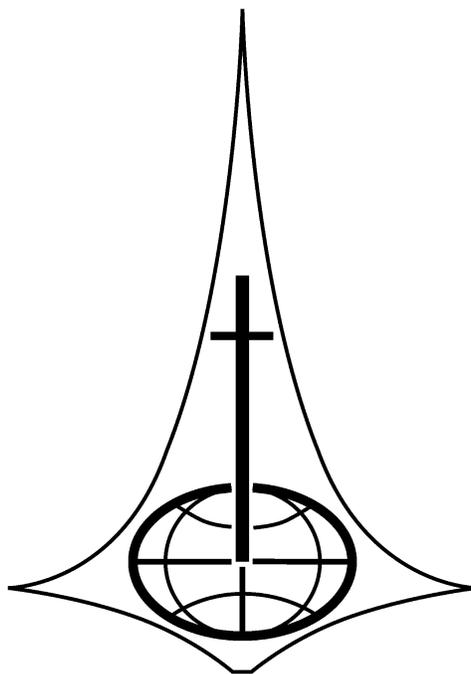
A proposed resolution applying for membership in the LWF was approved by the NALC Executive Council on May 9. The resolution will be presented for consideration by the NALC Convocation Aug. 16-17 at Calvary Lutheran Church in Golden Valley, Minn.

If the proposal is approved by the Convocation, the application for LWF membership must be ratified by a two-thirds majority of NALC congregations. It must also be accepted by the LWF.

The Lutheran World Federation is “a global communion of Christian churches in the Lutheran tradition.” It includes 145 church bodies in 79 countries.

Ninety-five percent of the world’s 74 million Lutherans are members of the 145 church bodies that are members of the Lutheran World Federation.

The 2011 Convocation approved *An Initial Statement on the Ecumenical and Inter-Lutheran*



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

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 relations, the resolution approved by the Executive Council 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.

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 impaired communion with certain other member Lutheran bodies.”

NALC, Lutheran CORE Convocations, Theological Conference are Aug. 14-17

The 2012 Convocation of the North American Lutheran Church will be Aug. 16-17 in suburban Minneapolis.

The NALC Convocation will be preceded by Lutheran CORE's Convocation on Aug. 14 and by the annual Theological Conference sponsored by Lutheran CORE and the NALC on Aug. 15-16.

The Convocation is the annual meeting of the NALC. All NALC congregations are entitled to at least one lay voting delegate at the Convocation. All NALC pastors are also voting delegates.

The Convocation will hear reports from NALC leaders, elect members of the Executive Council, and consider a budget for 2013.

Delegates will also consider a proposal for the NALC to apply for membership in the Lutheran World Federation. Faithful Lutheran church bodies in Africa and Eastern Europe have encouraged the NALC to join the LWF to add to their voice within the global Lutheran body.

Lutheran CORE's Convocation will gather Aug. 14 under the theme, "God's Future for Us." The Convocation — Lutheran CORE's annual meeting — will feature keynote addresses by Pastor Gemechis Buba, NALC Missions Director, and Dr. Robert Benne of Roanoke College in Salem, Va.

You can register online for all three events. Online registration is the preferred method of registration. The Convocations and Theological Conference are open to visitors as well as voting delegates.

All three events will be held at Calvary Lutheran Church in Golden Valley, Minn. Lodging information is available on the NALC website.

2012 Theological Conference

"Preaching and Teaching the Law and Gospel of God" is the theme for the Theological Conference sponsored by Lutheran CORE and the NALC.

The annual Theological Conference is held between the Lutheran CORE and NALC Convocations.

"This theological conference will focus on the art of properly distinguishing between law and gospel, which the Lutheran confessional tradition considers the chief principle for interpreting and understanding the teachings of the Bible," the conference brochure explains.

"These two words of Scripture, the word of God's judgment (law) and the word of God's justification (gospel), must be properly distinguished in every effort to reform and renew the church. . . . Confounding Law and Gospel is the principal source of confusion in the life of the church and its ministerial practices. It was so in Luther's day and it is so today."

Presentations for the theological conference include:

***Law and Gospel:
The Hallmark of Classical Lutheranism***
The Rev. Dr. Carl E. Braaten

The Law/Gospel Debate Revisited
A Reformed View – The Rev. Dr. Michael S. Horton
A Lutheran View – The Rev. Dr. Steven D. Paulson
A Catholic View – The Rev. Dr. Jared Wicks, S.J.

***Did Luther Get Paul Right
on the Doctrine of Justification?***
Dr. Stephen Westerholm

Law, Gospel, and the Beloved Community
The Rev. Dr. Paul R. Hinlicky

***Third Use of the Law:
Freedom and Obedience in Christian Life***
The Rev. Dr. Piotr Malysz

***Applying the Law/Gospel Distinction
in Preaching and Worship***
The Rev. Dr. Larry J. Yoder
The Rev. Dr. Amy Schifrin

Proposed Resolution regarding Application for Full Membership in Lutheran World Federation

Whereas the Constitution of the North American Lutheran Church states: "The (NALC) shall participate in Lutheran, ecumenical, and inter-religious relationships as part of its ministry and mission"; and

Whereas the document "An Initial Statement on the Ecumenical and Inter-Lutheran Commitment of the North American Lutheran Church," approved at the August 2011 NALC Convocation states, "As a new church body the North American Lutheran Church acknowledges with appreciation the various inter-Lutheran and ecumenical efforts to manifest Christian unity. We pledge ourselves to continue this journey toward unity among all Christians, convinced that the modern ecumenical movement is a gift of the Spirit of God to the churches as a means of expressing their oneness in Christ"; and

Whereas the Initial Statement as approved affirms: "As an initial strategy the North American Lutheran Church will...apply for membership in the Lutheran World Federation"; and

Whereas 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; and

Whereas the ecumenical partner of the Roman Catholic Church is the Lutheran World Federation; and

Whereas full membership within the Lutheran World Federation does not require, nor imply, altar and pulpit fellowship with all member Lutheran bodies; and

Whereas it is a present reality that certain member Lutheran bodies within the Lutheran World Federation understand themselves to be in impaired communion with certain other member Lutheran bodies; and

Whereas "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..." (13.03, NALC Constitution);

Now, Therefore, be it Resolved that the North American Lutheran Church apply for full membership in the Lutheran World Federation, accepting its constitution, and that NALC congregations be encouraged to ratify this application by December 31, 2012.



Ordination in Minnesota

Lyle Belleque was ordained as a pastor in the North American Lutheran Church on May 26 at Roseville Lutheran Church in Roseville, Minn. Pastor Belleque was called to serve Peace Lutheran Church in Devils Lake, N.D. Pastor Mark Chavez, NALC General Secretary, presided at the ordination.

Questions and Answers about NALC application for membership in LWF

Why is the North American Lutheran Church applying for membership in the Lutheran World Federation?

Because the Constitution of the NALC states, “the NALC shall participate in inter-Lutheran, ecumenical and inter-religious relationships as a part of its ministry and mission,” the Executive Council of the NALC has recommended that we apply for full membership in the LWF with voice and vote.

How did this process begin?

In fact, the NALC affirmed application for membership in the LWF at the August 2011 Convocation when it unanimously approved *An Initial Statement on the Ecumenical and Inter-Lutheran Commitment of the North American Lutheran Church*, which affirms: “As an initial strategy the North American Lutheran Church will...apply for membership in the Lutheran World Federation.”

What is the Lutheran World Federation?

The LWF is, by self-definition, “a global communion of Christian churches in the Lutheran tradition. Founded in 1947 in Lund, Sweden, the LWF now has 145 member churches in 79 countries all over the world representing over 70 million Christians.”

What is the purpose of LWF?

According to its constitution, the Lutheran World Federation:

+ “furthers the united witness to the Gospel of Jesus Christ and strengthens the member churches in carrying out the missionary command and in their efforts toward Christian unity worldwide;

+ “furthers worldwide among the member churches diaconic action, alleviation of human need, promotion of peace and human rights, social and economic justice, care for God’s creation and sharing of resources;

+ “furthers through cooperative study the self-understanding and the communion of member churches and helps them to act jointly in common tasks.”

What does the LWF believe?

The LWF consists of member churches which accept the “Doctrinal Basis” as stated in the LWF constitution: “The Lutheran World Federation confesses the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments to be the only source and norm of its doctrine, life and service. It sees in the three Ecumenical Creeds and in the Confessions of the Lutheran Church, especially in the unaltered Augsburg Confession and the Small Catechism of Martin Luther, a pure exposition of the Word of God.”

Why would we want to belong to the LWF?

We believe that being part of this global Lutheran communion will provide us with an important voice and vote in this international association of Lutherans. It is the only truly global fellowship of Lutherans with member churches in the global south as well as the north. Our fellow Lutherans in Ethiopia and Tanzania, in particular, have asked us to become full members of the LWF to provide an orthodox and confessional Lutheran partner in North America.

Does full membership in the LWF provide us with anything that can’t be gained apart from it?

The LWF is the primary Lutheran partner in international ecumenical relations between Lutherans and other Christian bodies, including the worldwide Anglican Communion, the World Methodist Council, and the Roman Catholic Church.

All international dialogues and activities happen between the LWF and these organizations. Apart from the LWF, we can have no involvement in official ecumenical interaction between Lutherans and others at the international level.

Continued on Page 5

Continued from Page 4

Similarly, the LWF fosters regional relationships and activities between member churches. We want to have both voice and vote for the sake of this regional cooperation as well as at the international level.

Does full membership in the LWF imply or require full communion between member Lutheran churches?

The LWF constitution does not use the words “full communion,” but rather states, “The Lutheran World Federation is a communion of churches which confess the triune God, agree in the proclamation of the Word of God and are united in pulpit and altar fellowship.”

LWF representatives recognize that this is a goal, but not a reality as many member churches are in what has been described as “impaired communion.” This means while we are part of the global Lutheran communion, that communion has been impaired at times between member churches. Lutheran member churches in Ethiopia and Tanzania explain their full membership in the LWF in a similar way.

In any case, NALC congregations retain the responsibility for determining who shall preach and preside within their local congregation and for establishing practices regarding the reception of the sacrament in their own congregations.

We’ve heard that the LWF is an extremely “liberal” organization, politically. Is this the case?

Many Lutherans have had concerns about the direction of the LWF within the last two or three decades.

In recent years, the LWF has engaged in an intentional redirecting of focus, beginning with the proposals made by the Renewal Committee (2007-2009), incorporated into a new *LWF Strategy 2012-2017: The LWF Communion—With Passion for the Church and for the World*. The first part of this strategy addresses “Who We Are As A Communion,” lifting up first and foremost that to be Lutheran is to be evangelical, proclaiming the good news of Christ’s life, His death on the cross and His resurrection.”

While this LWF work of renewal is ongoing, we

believe we have gifts and perspective to contribute to this continuing reform.

What is the process of application for membership into the LWF?

An application, as approved by the Executive Council of the NALC, has been submitted, with required supporting documentation. An initial consultation has taken place. Now a recommendation has come to the NALC 2012 Convocation from the Executive Council for approval. If approved, this action requires ratification by two thirds of our NALC congregations, as provided by NALC Constitution 13.03: “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.” If ratified, the LWF will act on our application, either by reception into membership by the Federation in the LWF Assembly, or in the interim, by the LWF Council.

What if the resolution for full LWF membership fails in the Convocation vote, or fails to be ratified by the required two-thirds of NALC congregations voting?

Our application for membership will be withdrawn.

Are other Lutheran bodies in North America full members in the LWF?

The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod and the Lutheran Church—Canada are not members of the Lutheran World Federation.

The Evangelical Lutheran Church in America and the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada are full members. Other North American members are: Lutheran Costa Rican Church; Nicaraguan Lutheran Church of Faith and Hope; Christian Lutheran Church of Honduras; and Salvadoran Lutheran Church.

How can we get more information, or have our other questions answered?

You can find answers at www.lutheranworld.org or by e-mailing Pastor David Wendel, NALC Assistant to the Bishop for Ministry and Ecumenism, dwendel@thenalc.org, or Pastor Mark Chavez, NALC General Secretary, mchavez@thenalc.org.

Lutheran World Federation includes most of world's 74 million Lutherans

Church bodies that are members of LWF have 70.5 million members

There are more than 74 million Lutherans worldwide, according to statistics released by the Lutheran World Federation.

Ninety-five percent of those Lutherans are members of the 145 church bodies that are members of the Lutheran World Federation. The church bodies in the LWF report 70.5 million members.

Nearly 3.7 million Lutherans are members of church bodies that are not members of the LWF. Most of those are in the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod.

The growing churches in Africa and Asia account for the growth in Lutherans worldwide. Lutheran membership on those continents has increased by about 3 percent since 2010, while it has decreased in Europe and North America. Africa has more than 20 million Lutherans — 27 percent of the world's total. Asia has 9.2 million Lutherans (12 percent).

About half of the world's Lutherans (36 million) live in Europe. Germany is the country with the most Lutherans with 12.5 million members in several church bodies.

With more than 125,000 members, the North American Lutheran Church is among the largest third of Lutheran church bodies world wide.

North America

Evangelical Lutheran Church in America	4,272,688
The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod*	2,400,000
Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod*	389,545
Lutheran Congregations in Mission for Christ*	321,000
Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada	144,947
North American Lutheran Church*	125,000
Lutheran Church—Canada*	51,650
Association of Free Lutheran Congregations*	44,500
Evangelical Lutheran Synod*	19,394
Church of the Lutheran Brethren of America*	8,860
Church of the Lutheran Confession*	8,108
Estonian Evangelical Lutheran Church Abroad	8,000
Apostolic Lutheran Church of America*	6,000

* *Not a member of the Lutheran World Federation*

Europe

Church of Sweden	6,589,769
Evangelical Lutheran Church in Denmark	4,469,109
Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland	4,353,352
Church of Norway	3,852,608
Ev. Lutheran Church of Hanover (Germany)	2,859,851
Evangelical Lutheran Church in Bavaria (Germany)	2,600,000
Ev. Lutheran Church in Württemberg (Germany)	2,212,190
Protestant Church in the Netherlands	2,096,774
North Elbian Ev. Lutheran Church (Germany)	1,996,391
Evangelical Church in Central Germany	839,916
Evangelical Lutheran Church of Saxony (Germany)	773,851
Ev. Lutheran Church in Oldenburg (Germany)	443,285
Ev. Lutheran Church in Brunswick (Germany)	386,329
Ev. Church of Augsburg Confession in Slovak Rep.	372,858
Ev. Church of the Augsburg Confession in Austria	310,097
Evangelical Lutheran Church of Latvia	250,000
Evangelical Lutheran Church of Iceland	247,245
Evangelical Lutheran Church in Hungary	213,125
Union of Protestant Churches of Alsace and Lorraine	210,000
Ev. Lutheran Church of Mecklenburg (Germany)	194,395
The Lutheran Council of Great Britain*	179,300
Evangelical Church of Czech Brethren	115,000
Estonian Evangelical Lutheran Church	180,000
Evangelical Church of Pomerania (Germany)	92,677
Ev. Lutheran Church in Russia and Other States	76,000
Ev. Church of the Augsburg Confession in Poland	70,000
Ev. Lutheran Church of Schaumburg-Lippe (Germany)	56,783
Slovak Ev. Church of Augsburg Confession in Serbia	49,000
Ev. Lutheran Church on the Faroe Islands*	40,280
Evangelical Lutheran Church of France	35,000
Independent Evangelical Lutheran Church (Germany)*	34,542
Church of Lippe (Germany)	31,000
Evangelical Lutheran Church in Romania	30,720
Latvian Evangelical Lutheran Church Abroad	25,850
Evangelical Lutheran Free Church of Norway	21,671
Evangelical Lutheran Church of Lithuania	20,000
Ev. Church of the Augsburg Confession in Slovenia	20,000
Silesian Ev. Church of the Augsburg Confession	16,500
Evangelical Lutheran Church of Ingria in Russia	15,000
Ev. Church of the Augsburg Confession in Romania	13,271
Malagasy Protestant Church in France	10,000
Ev. Luth. Churches in Switzerland & Liechtenstein	7,040
Evangelical Lutheran Church in Italy	7,000
Evangelical Church in the Republic of Croatia	3,329
Evangelical Lutheran Church in Baden (Germany)	3,120
Lutheran Church in Great Britain	2,745

Asia

Protestant Christian Batak Church (Indonesia)	4,100,000
Evangelical Lutheran Church of Papua New Guinea	900,000
Andhra Evangelical Lutheran Church (India)	800,000
Christian Protestant Church in Indonesia	587,985
Gossner Ev. Luth. Ch. in Chotanagpur, Assam (India)	421,000
The Protestant Christian Church (Indonesia)	360,956
The Indonesian Christian Church	355,000
Simalungun Protestant Christian Church (Indonesia)	217,000
Jeypore Evangelical Lutheran Church	175,000
Gutnius Lutheran Church – Papua New Guinea	149,455
North Western Gossner Ev. Lutheran Church (India)*	118,283
The Tamil Evangelical Lutheran Church (India)	108,250
Northern Evangelical Lutheran Church (India)	85,000
India Evangelical Lutheran Church	80,000
Lutheran Church of Australia	80,000
Basel Christian Church of Malaysia	59,500
Good Samaritan Evangelical Lutheran Church (India)*	57,635
Protestant Christian Church in Mentawai (Indonesia)	50,000
South Andhra Lutheran Church (India)	45,500
The Arcot Lutheran Church (India)	40,000
Pakpak Dairi Christian Protestant Church (Indonesia)	38,120
The Protestant Church in Sabah (Malaysia)	32,000
Christian Protestant Angkola Church (Indonesia)	29,311
Batak Christian Community Church (Indonesia)	25,000
Ev. Lutheran Church in the Himalayan States (India)	24,750
Japan Evangelical Lutheran Church	21,990
Mara Evangelical Church (Myanmar)	21,500
Indonesian Christian Lutheran Church	18,560
Christian Communion of Indonesia Church in Nias	18,500
Lutheran Church in the Philippines	18,000
Ev. Lutheran Church in Madhya Pradesh (India)	17,500
The Evangelical Lutheran Church of Hong Kong	15,800
Good Shepherd Evangelical Lutheran Church (India)	15,400
The Chinese Rhenish Church Hong Kong Synod	13,000
The United Protestant Church (Indonesia)	12,057
Taiwan Lutheran Church	11,050
Tsung Tsin Mission of Hong Kong	10,600
Bangladesh Northern Ev. Lutheran Church	10,000
Lutheran Church in Malaysia and Singapore	8,453
Lanka Lutheran Church (Sri Lanka)	5,324
Bangladesh Lutheran Church	5,050
Lutheran Church in Korea	4,824
Evangelical Lutheran Church in Malaysia	4,200
The Evangelical Lutheran Church in Thailand	3,524
Ev. Lutheran Church in Jordan and the Holy Land	3,000
Lutheran Church in Singapore	2,790
Japan Lutheran Church	2,723
Kinki Evangelical Lutheran Church	2,741
Myanmar Lutheran Church	2,150
Hong Kong and Macau Lutheran Church	1,999
Evangelical Lutheran Church in Myanmar	1,900
The Lutheran Church of Taiwan	1,827
Lutheran Church of Myanmar	1,620
Nepal Northern Evangelical Lutheran Church	941

Africa

Ethiopian Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus	5,846,407
Evangelical Lutheran Church in Tanzania	5,825,312
Malagasy Lutheran Church (Madagascar)	3,000,000
The Lutheran Church of Christ in Nigeria	1,900,000
The Evangelical Lutheran Church in Namibia	706,664
Evangelical Lutheran Church in Southern Africa	580,000
Ev. Lutheran Church in Republic of Namibia	420,000
Evangelical Lutheran Church of Cameroon	296,350
Evangelical Lutheran Church in Zimbabwe	242,000
The Lutheran Church of Nigeria	148,000
Evangelical Lutheran Church in Congo	136,000
Church of the Lutheran Brethren of Chad*	113,684
Ev. Lutheran Church of the Central African Republic	107,000
Church of the Lutheran Brethren of Cameroon	105,994
Evangelical Lutheran Church in Kenya	100,000
Evangelical Lutheran Church in Malawi	100,000
Lutheran Church in Liberia	71,196
Moravian Church in South Africa	50,000
Evangelical Lutheran Church of Angola	48,000
Kenya Evangelical Lutheran Church	44,000
Lutheran Church of Rwanda	40,000
Evangelical Lutheran Church in Botswana	18,800
The Evangelical Lutheran Church of Eritrea	11,000
Evangelical Lutheran Church of Ghana	27,521
Evangelical Lutheran Church in Mozambique	12,606
Ev. Lutheran Church in Southern Africa (Natal-Trans.)	9,986
Evangelical Lutheran Church in Namibia (GELC)	5,100
Ev. Lutheran Church in Southern Africa (Cape Church)	4,266
The Lutheran Church of Senegal	4,053
Evangelical Lutheran Church in Sierra Leone	3,150
Evangelical Lutheran Church in Zambia	2,210
Evangelical Lutheran Church of Congo	2,128

Latin America

Ev. Church of the Lutheran Confession in Brazil	717,127
Evangelical Lutheran Church of Brazil*	233,416
Evangelical Church of the River Plate (Argentina)	27,500
Evangelical Lutheran Church of Argentina*	30,000
Bolivian Evangelical Lutheran Church	22,000
Salvadoran Lutheran Church	20,000
Evangelical Lutheran Church in Guyana	13,000
United Evangelical Lutheran Church (Argentina)	11,000
Lutheran Church in Chile	10,280
Nicaraguan Lutheran Church of Faith and Hope	7,050
Evangelical Lutheran Church in Suriname	4,000
Evangelical Lutheran Church in Chile	3,000
Evangelical Lutheran Church of Colombia	1,998
Evangelical Lutheran Church in Venezuela	1,950
Christian Lutheran Church of Honduras	1,500
Mexican Lutheran Church	1,500
Lutheran Costa Rican Church	1,387
Peruvian Lutheran Evangelical Church	1,300

* Not a member of the Lutheran World Federation

2011 Convocation actions have been ratified by congregations

Two-thirds majority of congregations voting to approve has been reached

Congregations of the North American Lutheran Church have voted to affirm two major decisions made by the NALC's 2011 Convocation.

NALC congregations ratified a Full Communion Agreement with the Ethiopian Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus and amendments to the NALC Constitution that were adopted by the 2011 Convocation.

The two-thirds majority of NALC congregations necessary to approve the actions was achieved in May. Congregations approved both of the items that were sent to them for consideration.

As a part of its commitment to be congregationally-focused, the NALC constitution requires major decisions to be ratified by its congregations before going into effect.

At the time of the 2011 Convocation, the NALC had 250 congregations. Of those 250 congregations that are eligible to vote, 167 had to approve the actions to reach a two-thirds majority. The NALC now has more than 300 congregations.

Congregations were sent information on the ratification process including a response form. The information includes copies of the constitutional amendments and information about the Ethiopian Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus. The documents sent to congregations are also available on the NALC website — www.thenalc.org.

“Congregational participation is a cornerstone of NALC governance. One element of this participation is ratification. By requiring ratification of certain key decisions, the NALC ensures that NALC members are aware of and broadly support those decisions,” a letter to congregations explains.

Congregations that have not yet voted on the 2011 actions are still encouraged to vote as an

expression of their commitment to the NALC and to the ratification process.

Constitutional Amendments

The constitution and the proposed amendments, as approved by the Convocation, are available online at www.thenalc.org.

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

Information detailing the terms of office for officers and Executive Council members was added to the constitution, as was information on how to fill a vacancy in any office. Also added was a process for removing a person from elected office should that become necessary.

Full Communion with Ethiopian Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus

The 2011 Convocation of the North American Lutheran Church unanimously approved a Full Communion relationship with the Ethiopian Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus (EECMY).

The Ethiopian Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus, the Lutheran church in Ethiopia, is one of the largest Lutheran church bodies in the world, with 5.8 million members. It is also among the world's fastest growing churches.

The Rev. Dr. Gemechis Desta Buba, NALC Assistant to the Bishop for Missions, is a native of Ethiopia. He is widely respected among Ethiopian Lutherans and was instrumental in building the strong relationship between the EECMY and the NALC.



Pastor Joshua Ong poses with 10 new Christians who were baptized on Pentecost (May 27) at Church of the Living God, a NALC Chinese mission congregation, in Houston, Texas. The newly baptized are Hang Tao Zhao, Jianhua Zhou, Shelching Wang, Shuai Cheng Wang, Calvin Lum, YingKun Li, Shao Yan Xin, Weihwa Xiah, Candy Jiang, and Jennifer Lum.



Daniel Oak, one of the congregation's youth, is going to China to spend two years working at an orphanage started by a missionary from the United States. The congregation will support him while he is doing mission work in China.

Pentecost Baptisms



On June 10, Church of the Living God entered into 40 days of fasting and prayer as they discern the possibility of purchasing and moving into their own building to further their ministry reach. You can learn more about them at clgchurch.org.



Those being baptized pose with other members of the congregation.

Mission Planters Conference encourages new and established mission leaders

Mission planters and leaders from around the country gathered May 10-13 at First Evangelical Lutheran Church, in Houston, Texas.

Fifty leaders serving in a variety of settings, speaking different languages, and with varying experience levels came together to hear about developing strong mission congregations in the 21st century.

The time together included daily worship, networking and fellowship time, and presentations.



Those at the Mission Planters Conference engage in discussion.

Worship leaders and preachers included Bishop Emeritus Paull Spring, Pastor Evan McClanahan, Pastor Gemechis Buba, Pastor David Priem, Pastor Tim Christ and Pastor Eddy Perez.

Presentations were focused on creating a firm foundation of prayer, fostering discipleship, and being grounded and led by the Word of God.

One participant said that the conference provided a "refreshed spirit and solid ideas for missional church planting."

Pastor Gemechis Buba, Assistant to the Bishop for Missions, opened the conference with his presentation entitled "What does it mean to plant a Lutheran congregation in the 21st century?"

Dr. Buba shared that churches today need to offer a message of hope, provide a foundation, be of substance, be relational and a welcome place, have a cause and vision, be grounded in tradition and stability, and show conviction and sacrifice.

"The prime missionary is not us, it is Christ. He only needs a faithful few. ... Just be positioned and allow me (God) to do the job!" Dr. Buba said.

Attendees engaged in Bible study led by Pastor Scott Grorud of Faith Lutheran Church in Hutchinson, Minn. Pastor Grorud walked participants through the early church and Biblical principles of church planting, as shown in the book of Acts.

NALC Bishop John Bradosky spoke on evangelism and discipleship and opened his time with a question: "How can you tell when someone has been discipled?" He answered, "When they can disciple others."

Bishop Bradosky drew examples from Luke and Acts. He also shared examples from his own spiritual journey and experiences as a parish pastor to move beyond just filling ourselves with ideas and toward transformation.

Participants also were introduced to Pastor David Wendel, Assistant to the Bishop for Ministry and Ecumenism. Pastor Wendel spoke about tradition. He highlighted the difference between traditions and being Traditionally-grounded and how that relates to planting a congregation and setting new traditions grounded in Christ.

Continued on Page 11



Participants in the North American Lutheran Church's Mission Planters Conference posed for a group photo.

Continued from Page 10

Attendees also had a chance to share their stories and to hear stories from other mission planters.

Ministry leaders from rural, suburban, language-specific, and long-term missions were all represented on a panel discussion. The panel also included Pastor David Priem, Dean of the South Texas Mission District, who shared how he assists new missions in the Mission District and how a Mission District can help connect new fellowships with partners.

The final presentation was given by Dr. Buba, who laid out the mission categories used in the NALC mission office and strategies for growing from one

type to the next. Participants were encouraged to ask questions and to share their experiences in developing missions.

The conference ended with prayer and worship. Participants gathered to worship God, share Holy Communion and be commissioned by Dr. Buba. Attendees left Houston confirmed in their call to plant a congregation, strengthened through Christian fellowship and learning in the Word, and renewed in spirit.

If you would like to find out more about NALC Mission Conferences, planting or renewing a congregation, or how you can support a mission, please contact the missions office at 614-777-5709.

New NALC video is now available

A new video introducing the North American Lutheran Church is now available.

The video features NALC leaders telling the story of the NALC using the church's four core values: Christ-Centered, Mission-Driven, Traditionally-Grounded, and Congregationally-Focused.

You may watch the video online at the NALC website — www.thenalc.org.

DVD copies of the video will be distributed at the 2012 NALC Convocation. They can also be ordered by contacting the NALC financial administration office at nalc.mnoffice@thenalc.org or 888-551-7254. The first DVD of the video is complimentary; each additional DVD is \$2.00.

The video replaces the original introductory video prepared in 2010, prior to the NALC's Constituting Convocation.

Iglesia Luterana San Pedro Miami, Florida

By Pastor Dennis Nelson

Iglesia Luterana San Pedro traces its history to the 1930s when it was out in the country. Because of rapid growth in population, the same location is now in the inner city of Miami. In 1958, two congregations came together — St. Paul Lutheran Church and Holy Trinity Lutheran Church — to form St. Peter's Lutheran Church. They built a large facility and continued working in the area.



Beginning in 1959, there was a huge immigration of Cuban people to South Florida. The surrounding community soon became almost 100 percent Hispanic, so the congregation began a Spanish-speaking ministry. In 1991, after many of the Anglo members had moved out of the area, the English-speaking group left San Pedro, leaving the building to the Hispanics.

In 2008, after the pastor retired, Pastor Eddy Perez came to serve as a part-time interim, and then in May of 2009 he was installed as pastor. At the time of his coming, the synod was thinking of selling the property, because only 10 to 15 people were



attending worship services in a building that seats 900. But the members did not want to close.

After coming to Iglesia San Pedro, one of the first things that Pastor Eddy Perez did was to make changes in the worship service. He knew that a heavily liturgical service would not appeal to Spanish-speaking people, so he simplified the service and made it more contemporary in style.

He started a system of small groups and began training leaders to make disciples. He based his strategy upon 2 Timothy 2:2, where Paul tells Timothy, "What you have heard from me in front of many witnesses, encourage men and women to do the same." He began instructing leaders with the aim that they would then be able to lead small groups and train other leaders. In the last two years the attendance has tripled.

Pastor Perez is a native of Cuba, where he studied theology and earned a Doctor of Medicine degree. Planting two churches in central Cuba, he faced strong opposition from the Cuban government. In 2000, the harassment became so intense that he had to flee Cuba and come to the United States. His family joined him in Miami about one year later.

Continued on Page 13

Continued from Page 12

In June 2009, he led many of the Hispanic pastors in Florida to write a public letter to the voting members of the 2009 ELCA Churchwide Assembly, asking them to cast their votes based on faithfulness to the Scriptures. After the vote, he led most of the Hispanic pastors of the Florida-Bahamas Synod to write a public repudiation of the new ministry policies and social statement.

Pastor Perez addressed the Lutheran CORE Convocation in Fishers, Indiana, in 2009, and was elected to the Lutheran CORE Steering Committee in 2010. He also serves as dean for the Caribbean and Hispanic Ministries of the NALC.

A real crisis came in August 2009, when the ELCA Churchwide Assembly voted to approve ordaining persons in same-gender relationships. The congregation was 100 percent against the ELCA's actions, so San Pedro passed a resolution declaring themselves to be out of communion with the faction of the ELCA that was not following the Scriptures. The following year Iglesia San Pedro became one of the founding congregations of the North American Lutheran Church.

Iglesia Luterana San Pedro seeks to be faithful to God in a low income community. Due to the influence of the ELCA Florida-Bahamas Synod, the



Pastor Eddy and Yuddy Perez

congregation recently lost one of their two tenants. This loss led to a financial deficit for the church. The congregation is trusting God to provide a new tenant and to bless them as they are faithful to him.

Please remember Pastor Perez and Iglesia Luterana San Pedro in your prayers and consider becoming ministry partners with them.

Pastor Eddy Perez can be contacted at:

Iglesia Luterana San Pedro
3360 W. Flagler Street
Miami, Florida 33135
305-445-0626
pastoreddyperetz@yahoo.com

This article is reprinted from CORE Connection, the newsletter of Lutheran CORE. It is a part of a series of articles introducing worthy mission partners to member congregations. NALC congregations are encouraged to support one local and one international mission partner.

Sports Ministry is an outreach tool

By Pastor Todd M. Kornahrens

One of the main evangelistic tools Living Water Lutheran Church, Springboro, Ohio, utilizes to reach unchurched and de-churched people is our Sports Ministry program.

Statistics have shown that over 40 million youth and children in the United States played a sport in 2011.

The growth in youth sports has meant that in many areas sports have become ultra-competitive, which has caused more and more children to be “cut” from teams and not given opportunities to participate in these extra-curricular activities.

The recent strike in the National Football League brought to light the billions of dollars of revenues the league makes every year. In fact, 22 of the top 46 television events in American history are sports related.

Sports influence and play a major role in our society. At Living Water, we have felt called to engage the culture and to use the medium of sports to reach people and connect them to Christ.

Our primary Sports Ministry effort is to the youth and children of our community. Living Water Lutheran currently partners with several congregations in the area to offer the Springboro-Waynesville Upward Sports League.

Upward Sports is a youth sports program that targets children from four years old to seventh grade. Upward offers everything a church would need to run a successful youth sports league.

The church simply needs to provide enthusiastic, faithful volunteers. Upward offers soccer, flag football, basketball and cheerleading.

The Springboro-Waynesville Upward partnership offers all of these. Living Water takes the lead on the outdoor sports (flag football and soccer), while another church partner coordinates the league’s basketball efforts.

Offering all three sports allows youth to stay connected all year round and to give us more opportunities to reach children for Christ.

Each child that participates in Upward receives an Upward participant kit that kit includes a high quality uniform. Also, depending on the sport, they get a flag belt, soccer socks, a water bottle and/or shooting shirt.

Each child also gets Scripture memory verse cards that the coaches hand out throughout the season. The children are rewarded with a green star for memorizing the Scripture of the week. Children take great pride in getting these stars because they are able to display them on their jerseys or flag belt.

Children in our society seem to lack knowledge of Scripture, but the Upward program has allowed us to get four year olds to memorize Scriptures.

Coaches are required to give equal playing time to all children and to give an age-appropriate devotion at each practice session. The devotions are listed in the coach’s handbook and usually require just a little prep time to be able to be delivered in an effective manner.

At halftime of every game, one of the church staff members offers a devotion for the parents and grandparents in attendance. The crowds at soccer and football games are usually well over 100 people, larger than many churches in our society. This allows us to present the Gospel message to the parents.

Currently, our Upward program has over 400 participants. This number is much larger than the combined children and youth ministries at all four of the partner churches.

Over half of the participants are not connected to any church, but continue to be a part of the league because of the quality of coaching, Christ-centered atmosphere, and personal care they get.

Continued on Page 15



Pastor Todd Korahrens leads a prayer with soccer players taking part in Living Water Lutheran Church's sports ministry program.

Continued from Page 14

Some of these children and their families have started attending one of the partner churches. But even for those who do not, it allows us to plant the seeds of Christ at an early age and pray that the Spirit will harvest them at some point in their lives.

Living Water is also involved in many adult Sport Ministry programs as well.

We regularly put a sand volleyball team in the "bar league," as well as the indoor church leagues. It is important for us to maintain a team in the "bar leagues" because on the nights we play we wear our "Living Water Lutheran Church" shirts if for no other reason than to be a reminder and a witness of our God.

We have a church golf league, which has helped to get many of our "inactives" involved in a church event and to be around brothers and sisters in Christ, which has allowed them to feel a greater connection to the community and eventually become more active.

We also offer two fitness training classes at the church. We have a cardio class led by a personal trainer and a Zumba class. Both of these classes are attended by members and non-members and at the end of each the people are invited to stay for devotion.

Finally, we use sports to raise awareness and funds for some of our global missions.

We have the "Hotter than Haiti" 5k run and walk every year to support our mission efforts in Haiti. We also have a Global Missions Golf Tournament to help fund our missionary in Asia and our Cuban ministry.

These events draw from the community and not only introduce them to Living Water, but make them aware of some of the global needs we are working to address.

The days of "attractational" church (people coming because the big red doors are open) are over. For the church to grow in the 21st century, we have to move to a missional model of ministry.

People are already interested and involved in sports, so it is an easy way to meet people where they are with the good news of Christ crucified and hopefully, connect them to God through a local church.

Pastor Todd M. Kornahrens is pastor of Living Water Lutheran Church, a NALC congregation in Springboro, Ohio.

You can learn more about Living Water at www.livingwater.us and about Upward Sports ministries at www.upward.org.

Friends of Madagascar Mission

Friends of Madagascar Mission (FOMM) is a new organization with deep roots in the mission work of Madagascar.

FOMM helps to support three mission projects in Madagascar. All three projects are about evangelism — a chief emphasis of the Malagasy Lutheran Church.

1. Ejeda Hospital: A hospital of the Malagasy Lutheran Church in the southwest part of Madagascar. Families must provide food for the hospital patients. When a family cannot provide food because of poverty or draught conditions, FOMM provides financial resources to purchase and distribute food for the patients. The hospital ministers to the patients and their families' total needs: medically, physically and spiritually.

2. Prison Ministry: At the prisons, as at the Ejeda Hospital, the families must provide food



Distributing food to patients at Ejeda Hospital.

for individuals in prison. FOMM provides funds for the Malagasy Lutheran Church's Prison Ministry Program to purchase food; provide Bibles, medicine, clothing; and lead worship services and catechetical classes, baptize and counsel the prisoners.

3. Evangelists: After two years of study at a Malagasy Lutheran Bible School, an evangelist is prepared to move into a village to share the Good News of the Gospel! Often they move to a village that has no Christians and begin witnessing, teaching, and leading worship. A pastor in the area will come to provide the Sacraments of Baptism and Holy Communion.

Friends of Madagascar Mission has a goal to support 25 evangelists by the end of 2012. They are half way there and invite individuals and congregations to join in supporting this exciting mission. It costs just \$600 to support an evangelist for a year! Sponsors will receive updated reports and photos of the evangelist's work and family.



Worship at men's prison.

Continued on Page 17

Continued from Page 16

Friends of Madagascar Mission is a NALC-recognized mission organization incorporated as a non-profit, 501(c)3 organization and governed by a volunteer board of directors.

Friends of Madagascar Mission (FOMM) has been formed to be "On the Frontlines of Mission." This means:

1. 100 percent of a gift given to FOMM will go toward a mission project. Nothing will be taken out of a gift to pay for administrative costs. (There is an Administrative Fund, but donors must designate any gift toward administrative expenses.)

2. FOMM operates with very low administrative costs. It has no buildings. It does not ship any items or have any paid staff. All time and space is donated.



Eachweek the Prison Ministry team brings food to share with the prisoners whose families are unable to bring food.

3. FOMM works to "shorten the distance" between a specific mission need and the donor. As a result, funds given for a specific mission project are transferred

very quickly from FOMM to meet the needs in Madagascar.

4. FOMM does not ship anything as the costs for freight to Madagascar and the duties to get the items into Madagascar are very expensive. They believe it is better to use the money to purchase items within Madagascar and help the local economy.

There is a new day in global mission outreach and "Friends of Madagascar Mission" is pleased to be "On the Frontlines of Mission."

You can learn more about Friends of Madagascar Mission and their projects online at www.MadagascarMission.org. You may also contact them at: Friends of Madagascar Mission PO Box 46381

Eden Prairie, MN 55344
Telephone: 847-445-8177
FriendsOfMadagascarMission@gmail.com.



These six evangelists are supported by congregations in North America. Friends of Madagascar Mission has a goal of supporting 25 evangelists.

The NALC is for the Holy Estate of God-ordained Marriage!

Ministry Matters

“So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.” — Genesis 1:27

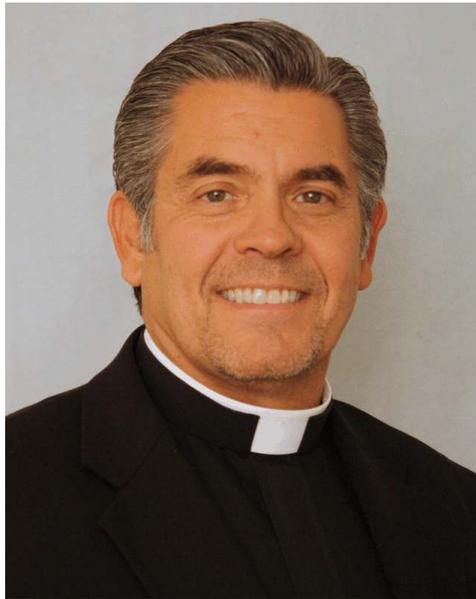
“Therefore a man leaves his father and mother and cleaves to his wife, and they become one flesh.” — Genesis 2:24

“Jesus answered, ‘Have you not read that he who made them from the beginning made them male and female, and said, ‘For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one?’” — Matthew 19:4-5

There is a great temptation for us to want to define ourselves in the North American Lutheran Church by what we are *against* — or what we are *not*.

It is time for us, as a young Lutheran body already maturing, to speak rather of what we are *for* as Lutheran Christians. And we are being called at this particular time in the Church and in history to affirm loudly and clearly that we are *for* the Biblically-defined, God-ordained holy estate of marriage!

There is surely no more timely an issue drawing attention today than the discussion or argument in our society concerning what marriage is. That has become all too clear recently when the two



Pastor David Wendel

presidential candidates came out clearly on opposite sides of this issue.

A Defense of Marriage Amendment (DOMA) was recently passed overwhelmingly in North Carolina, making a total of 30 states which have some form of DOMA legislation.

Regardless how one understands such legislation, the reality is that we are living and serving as the Church in a time when we must be ready to stand and affirm the Biblical testimony that God created marriage as a foundational relationship for society — and all human society, not just those within the Judeo-Christian tradition.

We are clearly being called to stand and affirm that marriage was created by God — not just for the Church — but to structure and order all of human life. This is why marriage is part of God’s order of creation.

Marriage is greater than the Church as it was created by God to provide a fabric for healthy, godly human existence. And marriage was created by God for male and female, with a complementarity and a difference that is at the heart of God’s established order.

The Bible begins with the creation of Adam and Eve — their “marriage” as they became one — and the Bible ends with another marriage — between Christ the bridegroom and His bride, the Church.

The Lord Jesus affirms this created structure and St. Paul teaches it as well. It is this created order which the Church of Jesus Christ is called to support, affirm and practice. The Biblical understanding must be the foundation of our ethical stand!

Therefore, in the NALC, we stand *for* this Biblical understanding. Clearly, there are some Lutherans who are speaking out against this Biblical ordering of

Continued on Page 20

Your Ministry to Boomers

In Pursuit of the Great Commission

By Pastor Don Brandt

Perhaps you've heard the one about the two elderly couples who were visiting over coffee:

One husband asked the other husband, "John, I understand you've been to a memory clinic. How did that go?"

John responded enthusiastically, "It was fantastic! I learned all the latest memory techniques; including visualization and association."

"Sounds great. What was the name of that clinic?"

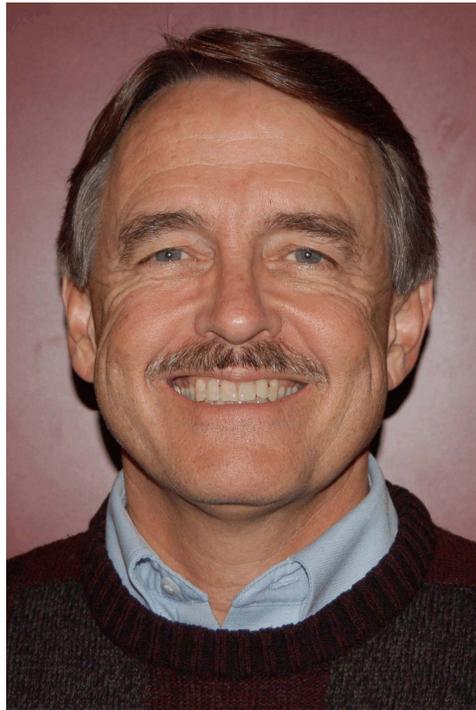
John thought and thought, but couldn't think of the clinic's name. Finally he asked his friend, "Tell me, what is the name of that flower...usually one flower on the end of a stem with thorns?"

His friend responded, "You mean a rose?"

"That's it!" John then turned to his wife. "Rose, what was the name of that clinic?"

To be honest, I don't enjoy jokes about aging as much as I did when I was younger. When it comes to my generation, let's face it: We're not "babies" anymore.

I'm referring to the over 75 million Baby Boomers out there — born from 1946 to 1964. Granted, it's never been easy growing older. But as a member of the famous



Pastor Don Brandt

(or is it infamous) Baby Boomer generation, this has been tough!

After all, Boomers prided themselves on being the original youth-oriented generation. A not uncommon saying, back in the late 1960s and early 70s, was "Never trust anyone over 40." And here we are, long past 40 and, in many cases, still in denial when it comes to our age and mortality.

But enough about me. In this month's column I'd like to explore the ministry opportunities for congregations seeking to reach this particular generation. (And don't delay...Time is limited!) Here are some ideas for your congregation to consider:

1. First, the really good news: Even with the recent economic

downturn, **a tremendous number of Boomers are currently retired, healthy, and financially solvent.** This means that many congregations have the opportunity to utilize the talents and energy of retired Boomers as potential **volunteers.**

Don't waste time; they won't be healthy forever. However, for now, there are millions of active, healthy Boomers ready to make a difference in their communities. Congregations would be wise to tap into their altruism and recruit them for events such as Habitat for Humanity work days or ministries for the homeless.

Many Boomers have, since their youth, prided themselves on being socially aware and committed to addressing community needs. Tap into that. And don't just provide these volunteer opportunities for your Boomer *members*; invite your members to recruit their *unchurched* Boomer friends to join in. Also consider the appeal of short-term mission trip opportunities.

2. Many Boomers are obsessed with their health. They are desperate to stay active and be intellectually engaged. Partly because of watching their parents age and struggle with their health and memory, Boomers are looking for ways to slow down the aging process. Congregations would be wise to offer classes and activities for

Continued on Page 20

Continued from Page 19

active, motivated Boomers. (Caution: Don't use the word "senior" to describe these opportunities. It's that matter of being in denial about their age again.) Consider exercise classes/outings, or sports activities for those "over 40."

3. Boomers are often looking for a community or group of peers to belong to. Many unchurched, active Boomers are interested in groups and activities involving other Boomers. Peer relationships, of course, are important to every generation. But remember that Boomers are a more homogenous generation than most, so they are especially motivated to connect with their generational peers.

Also, many Boomers have entered their retirement years very much alone. Over the last 20 years, the divorce rate among Boomers has increased by more than 50 percent! (And this has happened as the overall U.S. divorce rate has actually stabilized.) Imagine how important meaningful peer relationships must be for some of those entering retirement without a "significant other" in their lives.

You might want to recruit a few of your Boomer members to lead and launch a new small group for those of their generation; e.g., an "active retired" group. This group could organize for regular Bible and/or topical studies, and occasional outings.

4. Many Boomers are involved in caring for a parent. As of 2009, 19 percent of the overall U.S. population was involved in

caring for an older adult. And in only 10 percent of cases does a son handle the care. Typically it's a daughter, granddaughter, or niece who takes on this responsibility. This means that some congregations have an opportunity to organize respite care for caregivers. In some cases this could mean providing volunteer respite care for caregivers. In other cases the congregation could help with finding quality, trustworthy employees to assist caregivers. Finally, consider offering a support group for caregivers.

Every generation, in early retirement, includes those who are searching for a new purpose in life. Boomers are certainly no exception.

Demographically, this is an unprecedented opportunity. This is by far the largest generation in American history to ever reach retirement. Most of them still want to make a difference. They want their unique gifts and abilities to be valued, recognized and utilized. And this once youth-obsessed generation could also use some help addressing issues like aging and mortality.

One more thing: This is the generation that was, back in the 1970s, impacted by the "Jesus Movement." Millions of Boomers, in that decade, "came to Christ" through evangelical and mainline youth groups and campus ministries. And many of these young Christians later left "organized Christianity" once they began focusing on their careers. My guess is that a good number of them are ready to now return to the faith of their youth and reconnect with the Body of Christ.

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

Ministry Matters

Continued from Page 18

marriage as between one man and one woman, just as many in our world are seeking to transform marriage into something other than what God has created it to be. In the NALC, however, we are clear. In the Common Confession (2005), an appendix to the NALC Constitution, we state:

We believe and confess that the marriage of male and female is an institution created and blessed by God. From marriage, God forms families to serve as the building blocks of all human civilization and community. We teach and practice that sexual activity belongs exclusively within the Biblical boundaries of a faithful marriage between one man and one woman.

Now is the time for us to affirm this publically and without reservation. Now is the time for us to join together with all Christians who affirm the Biblically-defined, God-ordained holy estate of marriage. Now is the time for Christians to stand and speak out or "forever hold your peace."

Pastor David M. Wendel
Assistant to the Bishop for
Ministry and Ecumenism

Amen. Come, Lord Jesus

By Pastor Michael G. Tavella

At the Last Supper, Jesus said to His disciples, “Truly, I say to you, I will not drink again of the fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new in the kingdom of God” (Mark 14:25 ESV).

This passage immediately follows what we call the Words of Institution. It is clearly eschatological, that is, it refers to the end of all things. The word, *eschatological*, comes from a Greek word, *eschaton*, meaning “the end.”

The central message of Jesus’ ministry is, “The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel” (Mark 1:15 ESV).

Jesus proclaims and represents the coming kingdom that will be fulfilled in the future. The Holy Communion reflects this eschatological message of Jesus.

In the Eucharistic Prayer outlined in pink in the *Lutheran Book of Worship* and its longer variant in the Minister’s Edition, the congregation cries out, “Amen. Come, Lord Jesus.”

This acclamation comes after the *anamnesis*, where the Church remembers the saving deeds of the Son of God including the final act that we yet await, “...His coming in power to share with us the great and promised feast” (*LBW*, p. 70). We pray that Christ may come to us in the Eucharist but also to return in glory.



Pastor Michael G. Tavella

“Amen. Come, Lord Jesus” is a variant of an ancient Christian prayer. In Revelation, John cites the prayer at the end of his book. Jesus says, “Surely I am coming soon.” Then follows, “Amen. Come, Lord Jesus!” (Revelation 22: 20 ESV). The prayer is part of the conclusion of the Apocalypse whose theme is the future coming of Christ.

In a slightly different form, we find this prayer also in an ancient Christian document called *The Didache (Teaching of the Twelve Apostles)*. In this manual of instruction, prayers are cited for use during the Eucharist. In them are a number of eschatological references. After the reception of the Eucharist, a post-Communion prayer is provided at the end of which comes “Maranatha, Amen,” meaning “Our Lord, come. Amen.” This Aramaic prayer is transliterated into Greek letters.

The Apostle Paul cites it in 1 Corinthians 16 also transliterated into Greek letters.

The Eucharistic Prayer in the Pew Edition of *LBW* begins, “Holy God, mighty Lord, gracious Father: Endless is your mercy and eternal your reign” (*LBW*, p. 60). The reign of the Lord God is indeed eternal, and we, His people, will participate in it.

The prayer continues with a brief narrative of God’s righteous deeds, His saving actions toward Israel and the Church. This narrative of salvation concludes with a reference to the end of time. Christ’s first coming is the commencement of the future age. The Church now awaits the consummation set in motion by Christ. “...Through the prophets you renewed your promise; and, at the end of all the ages, you sent your Son, who in word and deed proclaimed your kingdom...”

The *anamnesis* reads in part, “And, believing the witness of his resurrection, we await his coming in power to share with us the great and promised feast.” We await the fulfillment of Christ’s promise to return and to bring us into His kingdom. The Church watches and serves in expectancy for the return of her Lord when we shall share in the heavenly banquet.

Yet another reference to the end of time and the fulfillment of God’s promises is located in the *epiclesis*, the invocation of the

Continued on Page 22

Continued from Page 21

Holy Spirit. "Send now, we pray, Your Holy Spirit, the spirit of our Lord and of His resurrection, that we who receive the Lord's body and blood may live to the praise of your glory and receive our inheritance with all your saints in light." Inheritance is a word employed to describe the heavenly kingdom that we shall receive as the children of God and heirs. Finally, in this prayer, we hear these words, "...until He comes as victorious Lord of all." (LBW, p. 71)

This beautiful Eucharistic Prayer is replete with eschatological reference. It reflects the eschatological emphasis of the early Church as indicated in the prayers in *The Didache*.

The Lord's Prayer follows the Eucharistic Prayer. In this prayer that the Lord Jesus taught His disciples, we pray, "...your kingdom come." The eschatological nature of our Christian faith again is brought forth.

Other places in the Ordinary of the service (the Ordinary includes all elements of the liturgy that do not change from week to week) where the end of all things and the heavenly kingdom are mentioned include the Second and Third Articles of the Creeds and the Offertory Song, "Let the vineyards be fruitful."

The Prayers of the Day (Collects), included among the Propers (portions of the service that change from week to week), that come at the end of the Church Year and at the beginning of the Church Year in Advent possess a

strong eschatological theme. "Stir up, your power, O Lord, and come." (LBW, p.13, Prayer for the First Sunday in Advent) Appointed Scriptures present the eschatological message. The coming of the Lord at the end of time is a primary theme of the late Pentecost and the Advent season.

The Eucharistic feast is an anticipation of the heavenly banquet. Drawn from passages in Revelation, the canticle "This is the feast" includes this text, "For the Lamb who was slain has begun his reign. Alleluia." (LBW, p. 61) The reign of Christ, the God-man, begins with His triumphal resurrection and ascension to the right hand of God. We shall share in His victory and in His reign.

The Christian faith cannot be understood without eschatology. Thus, the liturgy reflects the Church's anticipation of the return of the Lord. Though the Church has waited for the *parousia* (the coming or appearance of Christ) longer than expected, we are to be disciples who follow Christ with the realization that He could return at any time to fulfill His promises.

In the construction of new Eucharistic Prayers, based on the classical model, the eschatological element must not be omitted. What follows is a new Eucharistic prayer, which like the prayer from the *LBW Pew Edition*, includes references to the end time. Brief commentary will be provided for each part of the prayer. The prayer draws on Biblical themes and reflects common themes in other Eucharistic Prayers.

You are holy, Lord God Almighty, and Your glory is eternal.

The prayer begins with themes taken up from the *Sanctus*, that is, the holiness and glory of God. God is recognized as eternal. Unlike His creation, which passes away, the Lord is not only the One "who was, and is, and is to come" (Revelation 4: 8 ESV), but is the One who exists beyond time. He was before time and will be after all things pass away. He exists in time and beyond time.

Through Your Word, You created us and all that exists. You made man and woman in Your own image and likeness, blessed them, and gave them dominion over all things. When our first parents disobeyed your command, You barred us, who are one with them in sin, from the tree of life. As sin and death came into the world through one man, grace, righteousness and life come to us through One Man. At the right time, You fulfilled Your promise to Abraham to bless all nations in Your only Son, Jesus Christ, begotten eternally and of one Being with You.

The prayer on the lips of the pastor is a confession that God created the universe through the Word. The theme of the Word's creative work is taken from the Prologue of the Gospel of John. The narrative continues with reference to the creation and fall of humanity recorded in Genesis. We were made in God's likeness and given dominion over all creation. We have fallen into sin. Adam and Eve represent all humanity. The prayer then

Continued on Page 23

Continued from Page 22

reflects what Saint Paul writes in Romans 5 that as sin and death entered the world through one man, salvation has come through One Man, Jesus Christ, who was sent to fulfill what God promised to Abraham, that he would be a blessing to the nations (See Genesis 12 and Romans 4). Christ is the eternally begotten Son of the Father, affirmed at Nicaea and reaffirmed at Constantinople, the first two ecumenical councils which produced the Nicene Creed.

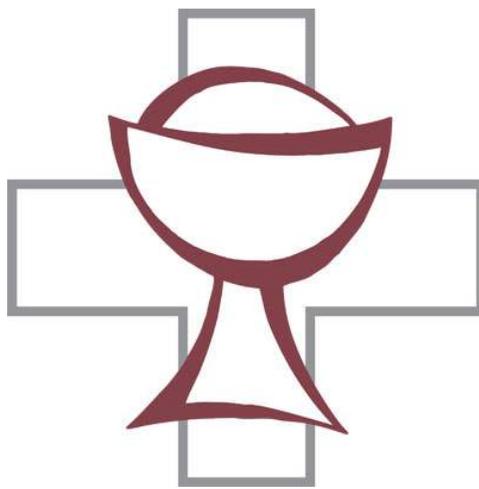
The *anamnesis* follows the Word of Institution.

Remembering His once and for all sacrifice for sin, His triumphant resurrection and ascension, and awaiting His return in glory in the clouds of heaven, we present this bread and wine and ourselves as a living sacrifice, which is our spiritual service.

The *anamnesis* attests to the fact that we are doing what Christ commanded at the Last Supper, “Do this in remembrance of me.” We remember before God His acts of salvation through His Son and present bread and wine and ourselves as a living sacrifice as Paul writes in Romans 12. In the *anamnesis* an eschatological note is sounded. Christ will return in the clouds of heaven. As we await Him, we obediently celebrate the Sacrament of the Altar.

The *epiclesis*, the invocation of the Holy Spirit, follows the *anamnesis*.

Send Your Holy Spirit upon these gifts, taken from Your bounty,



and upon us so that we may be nourished in body and soul with this Holy Sacrament for the forgiveness of sins, life, and salvation.

The *epiclesis* is an invocation of the Holy Spirit to come upon us and the gifts of bread and wine that we have presented at the altar in obedience to Jesus’ command. We pray for a worthy Communion whereby we receive the Sacrament in faith, strengthened by the Spirit through Holy Communion. The Sacrament nourishes the whole person, body and soul. The benefits of forgiveness of sins, life, and salvation, mentioned in the prayer, reflect *The Small Catechism* of Luther.

Strengthen us for our vocation as Your disciples in the world until the day when You assemble Your Church from the ends of the earth to enter the heavenly city of New Jerusalem, where all the blessed saints and martyrs sing Your praise.

We pray that the Eucharist will strengthen us for discipleship in the world until we enter into the Kingdom where we shall join the

Church victorious before the throne of God. Once again, the eschatological theme is sounded forth. The words “...assemble Your Church from the ends of the earth” reflect the post-Communion thanksgiving prayer in *The Didache* that follows the reception of Communion, where it is said that the Church will be gathered from the four winds. In Mark, Jesus says to the disciples, “And then he will send out the angels and gather his elect from the four winds, from the ends of the earth to the ends of heaven” (Mark 13: 27 ESV).

You are worthy to receive glory and honor and power, O Father, through Your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

The doxology includes words from a heavenly hymn found in Revelation 4. The prayer is addressed to the Father, through the Son, in the unity of the Holy Spirit. The Amen is the congregation’s “so be it.”

Next month we will look at the theme of praise and thanksgiving found in the Eucharistic Prayer and in what precedes and follows this prayer.

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.



NALC

North American Lutheran Church

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

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.**

NALC News

Published monthly by

North American Lutheran Church

3500 Mill Run Drive
Hilliard, OH 43026-7770

Phone: 614-777-5709

www.thenalc.org

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

*Please copy and share
this newsletter widely.*