

NALC News

North American Lutheran Church

May 2012



Pastor Gemechis Buba, NALC Missions Director, commissions youth at Ilaamee Mission Convention April 22 in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.

Mission Driven

Members and leaders of the North American Lutheran Church recently gathered for two significant mission events: the International Mission and Theological Conference in Ethiopia and the NALC Mission Planters Conference in Houston, Texas.



Participants in the North American Lutheran Church's Mission Planters Conference May 10-12 in Houston, Texas, posed for a group photo. The conference gathered under the theme "Developing Characteristics of a Church Planter." Speakers included NALC Bishop John Bradosky, Missions Director Gemechis Buba, Ministry Coordinator David Wendel, and Pastor Scott Grorud.

Ratification of 2011 NALC Convocation actions is nearing a two-thirds majority

Congregations of the North American Lutheran Church have been voting to affirm two major decisions made by the NALC's 2011 Convocation. But final ratification remains a few votes short of the two-thirds majority necessary to approve the actions.

About 80 churches have not yet voted or submitted a report of their vote.

Two decisions by the Convocation have been sent to congregations for consideration:

- + A Full Communion Agreement with the Ethiopian Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus.
- + Amendments to the NALC constitution.

As of May 17, 164 congregations have voted to ratify the amendments to the NALC constitution. The full communion agreement with the Ethiopian Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus also remains just a few votes short of approval.

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

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.

The decision on whether to ratify Convocation actions will normally be part of a regularly scheduled congregational meeting such as an annual meeting.

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.

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 5.6 million members. It is also among the world's fastest growing churches.

The Rev. Dr. Gemechis Desta Buba, NALC Missions Director, 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.

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

Registration is now open for the 2012 Convocation of the North American Lutheran Church to be held 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 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 seek 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?***
The Rev. 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

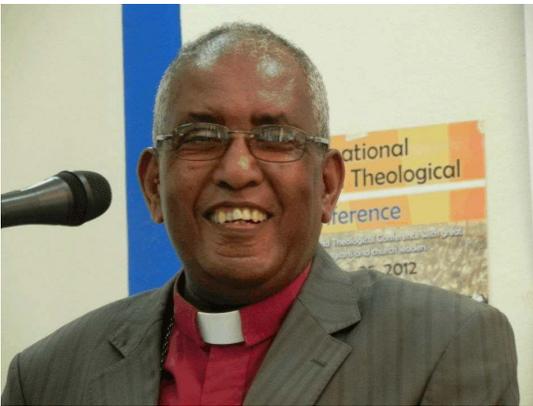
***Applying the Law/Gospel Distinction
in Preaching and Worship***
The Rev. Dr. Larry J. Yoder
The Rev. Dr. Amy Schiffrin



*The Rev. Dr. Wakseyoum Idossa
President of EECMY.*



*Rev. Berhanu Ofga'a,
EECMY General Secretary*



*The Rev. Iteffa Gobena,
EECMY President Emeritus*



The Rev. Dereje Jemberu leads worship.





24 new missionaries were commissioned at the Ilaamee Mission Convention in Ethiopia on April 22..



International Mission and Theological Conference

April 23-25

Addis Ababa, Ethiopia



*The Rev. Yonas Yigezu
EECMY Director of Mission and Theology*



EECMY leaders pray for NALC Missions Director Gemechis Buba.





Pastor and lay leaders from Burayyu Church



Kindergarten class at Burayyu Church School

Burayyu Church and School



Burayyu Church School



Burayyu Church

Ethiopian Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus



Interior of Burayyu Church



Children playing at Burayyu Church School

Ministry Coordinator's Corner

One of the strangest — yet all too common — phrases I hear is the answer to “What is your average worship attendance?”

Nine times out of ten, the response from a parish pastor or call committee chairperson is, “we worship 100 (or 150 or 200)”.

Oddly, it has become usual for Lutheran to think of “worship” as a verb, with the subject “we” and the direct object “100”.

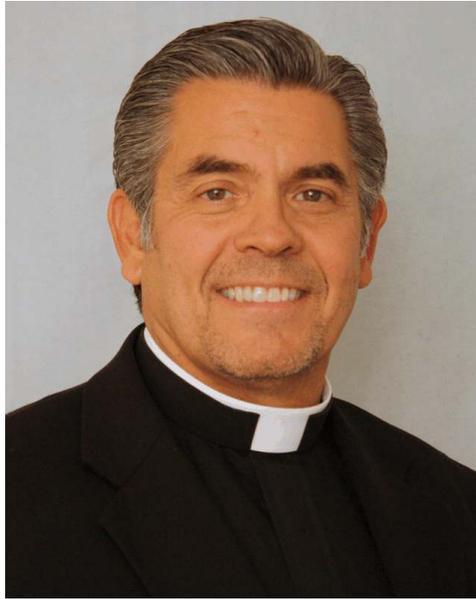
Think about it — what does it mean really, literally, to say “we worship 100 on Sunday.” Of course, most know what is meant, but what is meant is not what is said.

What is said is that “we” are worshipping “100” — 100 something or someone. What is meant is that average attendance in worship is 100, but that’s not what is said.

I mention this because it reminds us that we worship first and foremost, not 100, but one God in three Persons!

We are confessional Lutherans, which means that we affirm the Holy Scriptures as God’s Word and the three ecumenical creeds as true expressions of Biblical truth.

The three creeds are nothing but statements of our belief in God — the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. We worship always and only this Triune God who has revealed Himself through His Word.



Pastor David Wendel

We in the NALC unabashedly and unashamedly use the Biblical name, Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

As I was visiting with a congregation considering affiliation with the NALC recently, the members seemed pleasantly surprised that I would speak of God in this way, specifically addressing God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit. We need to remember and realize that in much of liberal Protestantism today this is not the case. All kinds of names are often used for God, but not Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

In the NALC, however, in response to such an unwillingness to use the Biblical Triune Name, one might find that we are intentionally using the specific name of the Trinity more regularly. This makes it clear that we are praying and worshipping not in the name of God in general or in abstract, but that we are distinctly and distinctively Trinitarian. This is an important part of our visible, public witness.

Dr. Robert W. Jenson said at the NALC-Lutheran CORE Theological Conference in August 2010, “Our time in the life of the church is characterized by loose talk of God. This is not a specifically Lutheran problem, though we perhaps have our peculiarities; nor within Lutheranism does it afflict only the so-called progressive party. American Christianity says, ‘God ... God ... God’ as if everybody knew who and what that was, whereas in fact there is a multitude of claimants to this common noun.”

Jenson continues, “At bottom, faithless speech of God is speech undisciplined by Scripture’s ways of identifying God. Indeed, inattention to God’s identity and to the way Scripture provides language shaped to it, is behind much of our generally arbitrary handling of Scripture.”

Finally, Jenson asserts, “No substitution for ‘Father’, or ‘Son’, or ‘Spirit’ can be faithful. One simple reason is that we have a name for God at all only because the Lord mandated this one. It is directly revealed. . .” (*Seeking New Directions for Lutheranism*, ALPB, 2010, pages 109-121).

Let us not be characterized by “loose talk of God” in the NALC. Let us not use “speech undisciplined by Scripture’s ways of identifying God.” Let us be clear about whom we worship — not God in general, not “100,” but God who has revealed Himself as Father, Son and Holy Spirit!

Mark Chavez elected president of Association for Church Renewal

Pastor Mark Chavez, NALC General Secretary, was elected president and board chair of the Association for Church Renewal (ACR) at the group's March 12-13 meeting in Washington, D.C.



Mark Chavez

Pastor Chavez has had a long involvement with the ACR during his service as Director of Lutheran CORE and as vice president of the WordAlone Network. He has continued as a representative of the NALC.

The ACR includes leaders of movements like Lutheran CORE from across the historic mainline Protestant church bodies.

Founded in 1996 and led for many years by the Rev. Jim Heidinger of the United Methodist Good News Movement, the ACR has labored to encourage and strengthen participating renewal movements in the mainline denominations.

The group offers a newsletter and its gatherings as resources for renewal to its member denominations.

“Ever since I’ve known Mark Chavez, we have shared a bond of spirit and calling for the Church of Jesus Christ. He has the wisdom, experience, and connections to lead the Association for Church Renewal in its next steps forward. The Spirit of God is on him,” said the Rev. Bob Thompson, president of Faithful and Welcoming Churches (which works in the United Church of Christ) and previous ACR Board Chair.

The ACR approved a constituency policy, which clarifies that “any individual working to achieve the revitalization of a historic mainline denomination and/or foster the planting, growth and vitality of a denomination that is a Biblically orthodox off-shoot of such, is welcome to participate in ACR.”

Other Lutheran participants in the meeting were Bishop John Bradosky of the NALC; Pastor Steve Shipman, Director of Lutheran CORE; and Pastor Richard Mathisen, a retired ELCA pastor who is a member of Lutheran CORE. Pastor Mathisen was elected Secretary.

“We in Lutheran CORE value the Association for Church Renewal’s work, for it reminds us that we are not alone in the ministry of church renewal. We are also grateful for the relationship Mark is able to provide both in the NALC and to Lutheran CORE. We look forward to his leadership in ACR,” said Pastor Shipman, Director of Lutheran CORE.

A dynamic keynote presentation was given by noted Christian apologist Alex McFarland on the church’s need for an ability to articulate the faith to an increasingly skeptical and unbelieving world. A former president of Southern Evangelical Seminary, he has debated well-known skeptics such as Michael Shermer and the late Christopher Hitchens.

Book from 2011 Theological Conference

No Other Name: Salvation in Christ Alone is a new book featuring the papers presented at the 2011 Theological Conference sponsored by Lutheran CORE and the North American Lutheran Church last August in Hilliard, Ohio.

Seeking New Directions for Lutheranism: Biblical, Theological, and Churchly Perspectives, the book containing the papers from the 2010 Theological Conference, is also available.

Both books were edited by the Rev. Dr. Carl E. Braaten.

The books may be ordered from the American Lutheran Publicity Bureau online at alpb.org or by phone at 607-746-7511.

Washington church celebrates 100 years

Port Madison Lutheran Church on Bainbridge Island, Wash., will celebrate the 100th anniversary of its church building on Sunday, May 20.

NALC Bishop John Bradosky will preach and preside at the 11 a.m. centennial celebration worship service. But another special guest may attract more attention than the bishop — a woman who was baptized at the sanctuary's dedication service 100 years ago.

Minnie Sorenson O'Brien, one of two children baptized at Port Madison's dedication worship service on May 19, 1912, will be present for the celebration.

Mrs. O'Brien was the third child born to Andrew Sorensen, a fisherman, and his wife Inga. Born and raised on Bainbridge Island, she remembers living next door to her aunt and uncle in a home that was hauled across land by horse and sled to its location. She celebrated her 100th birthday in March. She plans to come with her daughter, Joanne, who was also baptized at Port Madison Lutheran Church.



Port Madison Lutheran Church on Bainbridge Island, Wash.

Several people whose families were early members of the congregation, which traces its roots to Norwegian immigrants, will also be present.

A centennial concert featuring "The Four Seasons" String Quartet and a catered reception will also be a part of the centennial celebration.

"We who are stewards of Port Madison Lutheran Church 100

years after the first families built and dedicated this sanctuary are called to continue God's work of proclaiming the Gospel," said Pastor Lori Hoyum. "And just as He has been faithful to this congregation for the last 100 years He will be faithful in strengthening us for service in the future."

You can learn more about Port Madison Lutheran Church at portmadisonlutheranchurch.org.

New York church recovers from flood damage

St. Mark's Lutheran Church in Middleburgh, N.Y., will rededicate its building on Sunday, June 3.

Flooding caused by Hurricane Irene last August sent over four feet of water through St. Mark's sanctuary and ministry center.

The congregation has been able to rebuild and to resume full use of the building, thanks to thousands of hours of volunteer labor and many generous

donations. They have also been able to continue and even expand their many community ministries.

Pastor David Wendel, NALC Ministry Coordinator, and Pastor Michael Tamorria, the congregation's interim pastor, will lead the service.

St. Mark's invites all who shared in the rebuilding through their gifts, labor, or prayers to join them for the celebration.

NALC able to receive Thrivent Choice funds

The North American Lutheran Church is now able to receive Thrivent Choice Dollars directed by members of Thrivent Financial for Lutherans.

Thrivent Choice Dollars are allocated to eligible members of the fraternal benefit society based on insurance premiums, contract values, and involvement in a volunteer leadership position.

You can learn more about who is eligible to designate Thrivent Choice Dollars and how Thrivent Choice Dollars are allocated at www.thrivent.com or by calling 800-THRIVENT (800-847-4836).

You can also find NALC congregations and other organizations eligible to receive Thrivent Choice Dollars on Thrivent Financial's website.

Nominations open for NALC leaders

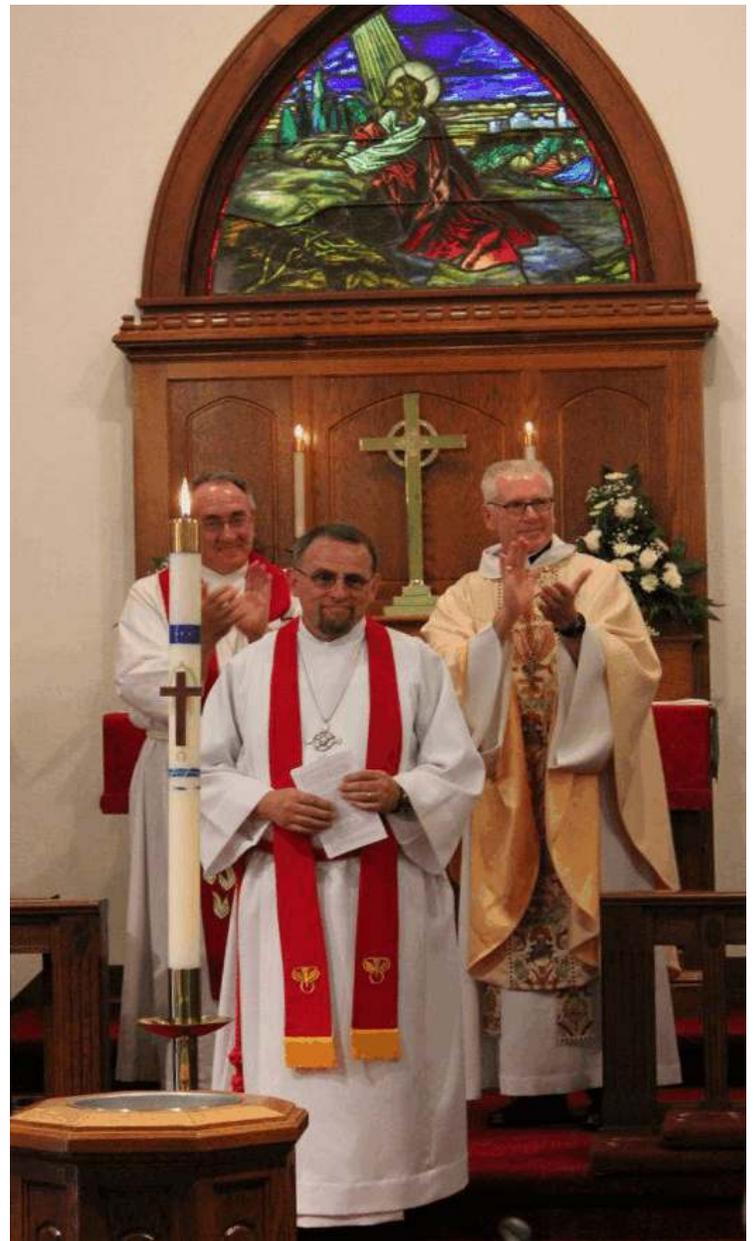
Congregations of the North American Lutheran Church are invited to nominate individuals to serve on the NALC's Executive Council, Court of Adjudication, and 2013 Nominating Committee.

The 2012 NALC Convocation Aug. 16-17 will elect one lay person and one pastor to four-year terms on the NALC Executive Council and one member of the Court of Adjudication to a four-year term.

The Convocation will also elect the members of the 2013 Nominating Committee.

All nominees must be members of a NALC congregation. All ordained nominees must be NALC pastors.

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



Ordination in North Carolina

Mark Ryman was ordained as a pastor in the North American Lutheran Church May 6 at St. John's Lutheran Church in Asheboro, N.C., where Pastor Ryman was called to serve as pastor.

NALC Bishop John Bradosky presided at the ordination. He was assisted by Pastor Carl Haynes, Dean of the Carolinas Mission District.

The photo from the ordination service shows Pastor Ryman responding to the acclamation of the congregation as Bishop Bradosky and Pastor Haynes look on.

Ordination in South Dakota

Dale Hamre was ordained as a pastor in the North American Lutheran Church on April 17 at St. John Lutheran Church in Selby, S.D., where he serves as pastor.

Pastor Randy Eisenbeisz, Dean of the Eastern South Dakota Mission District, presided at the ordination.

Pictured are participants in the ordination service: (back row, from left) Pastor David Baer, Pastor Randy Eisenbeisz, Lay Minister Dennis Wheeler,

Pastor Ronald Nelson; (front row) Pastor Frezil Westerlund, Deaconess Joyce Matheny, Pastor Dale Hamre, Pastor Marylou Gruebele, Pastor Chris Alexander, and Pastor Douglas Westerlund.



Rocky Mountain Mission District organizes

The Rocky Mountain Mission District held its organizational gathering April 21 at Lord of the Hills Lutheran Church in Centennial, Colorado.

Sixteen people were in attendance at the gathering, representing the four NALC congregations of the Mission District: Faith Community Lutheran Church, Longmont, Colo.; Oromo Evangelical Church of Denver, Colo. (an NALC mission congregation); Black Forest Lutheran Church, Colorado Springs, Colo.; and Saint Luke's Lutheran Church, Colorado Springs, Colo.

A charter was presented and approved, which includes the stipulation that the NALC bishop

will appoint a provisional dean for the district on an annual basis until the mission district has 10 member congregations.

At the meeting, it was announced that NALC Bishop John Bradosky is appointing Pastor Bruce Welander (retired) as provisional dean for one year.

Pastor Welander has served in many capacities in the larger Lutheran church, and served for many years as pastor of First Lutheran Church in Longmont, Colo. He is currently a member of Faith Community Lutheran Church in Longmont.

Pastor Welander is also providing monthly Word and Sacrament ministry for New Life Lutheran

Church, a NALC mission in Paxton, Neb.

Former provisional dean, now Ministry Coordinator of the NALC, Pastor David Wendel presided at the meeting and represented the NALC.



*Christ-Centered
Mission-Driven*

*Traditionally-Grounded
Congregationally-Focused*

Bringing Living Water to Haiti

By Pastor Todd Kornahrens

Eleven disciples from Living Water Lutheran Church in Springboro, Ohio, went on a six-day mission trip to Guitton, Haiti, last February. The trip was arranged through Sundoulos Mission Inc. (SMI) of Indiana.

Several of us on this trip had been to Haiti in June of 2011 with another mission organization and left with feelings of hopelessness and frustration. That organization was so caught up in numbers — number of people saved, number of clothes distributed, and number of meals provided — that we did not get a chance to truly connect with the people or see anything that offered hope and change to the community.

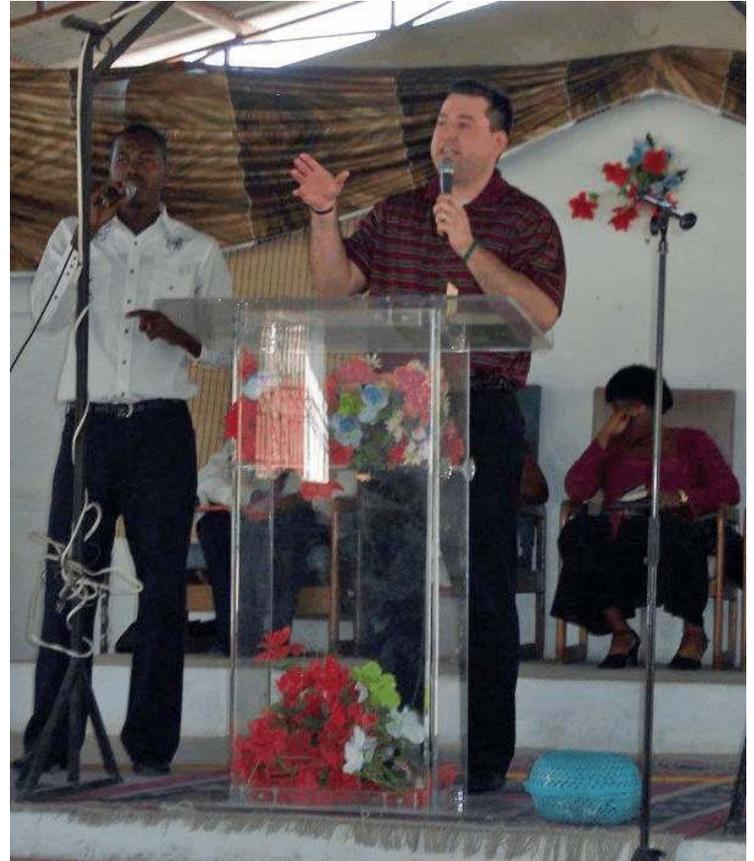
Despite that, we felt a real desire to go back and serve the people of Haiti. Haiti is the poorest country in the western hemisphere and one of the poorest countries in the world. Many people refer to Haiti as a fourth world country because it lacks a sustainable economic system and has a 70 percent unemployment rate. There is also just something about the Haitian people that captivates your heart, making you want to go back and serve them in the name of Jesus Christ.

We are extremely glad that we went back, because our experience with SMI was drastically different.

Three years ago Guitton did not have a school or a church. SMI established the first church in this heavily Voodoo-saturated area, and it has grown to more than 150 members in just three short years.

SMI also established the first school in Guitton. It is the only free school in the area and has over 130 children attending. (Living Water is sponsoring over 30 of them). There is a drastic difference between the people who attend church and the students that attend school and those that do not.

The Guitton Church and Guitton School have given people hope that tomorrow does not have to look like today and that they can be a servant of Christ, not a slave to their circumstances.



Pastor Todd Kornahrens of Living Water Lutheran Church in Springboro, Ohio, preaches at SMI mission in Haiti.

It has also taught them that they were made in the image of God, so they deserve better. As the “salt of the earth,” they can help their community reach a higher level. Working with the church — where I actually got the chance to preach on Sunday morning — and the school gave our group a sense of hope for the community.

Another great aspect of this trip is that many of the children hang out at the “Mission House” when school is done for the day. This gave our group many opportunities to interact with the children in different games like hop-scotch, basketball, soccer, jump rope and more.

One day, our group put on a carnival for the children, which was a lot of fun and gave the children something constructive to do that afternoon.

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Forming relationships was a double-edged sword.

While it allowed us to get to know them better so we could discover their dreams and their needs in order to better serve them, it also made it very difficult to leave them at the end of the week.



Members of Living Waters Lutheran Church in Springboro, Ohio, pose for a group photo at mission in Haiti.

SMI is currently working on planting another church and school in the nearby village of Nanwoch. This would be Nanwoch's first church and school. After having an opportunity to distribute rice in that area, we could see the drastic need to grow faith and educate the children who currently have no way to receive education and break the poverty cycle.

We had a wonderful opportunity to pray on the empty field that SMI had purchased for the new church and school. In just a few short months they have already constructed the walls and will be putting the roof on soon. Chairs have been donated and will be on the next container shipment to Haiti. This just helped our team see how God is working in Haiti through the people of SMI.

SMI does not just offer mission trips. There are many ways to get involved year round, including child sponsorships.

A \$220 gift covers a student's uniform (often the only set of clothes they have), three meals a week (frequently the only meals they get), materials, and teachers' salaries.

SMI does not have a full-time missionary at the Mission House, which allows them to need less money to finance their trips and empowers the Haitians to do more of the ministry and work.

The trip with SMI was truly a remarkable experience that greatly impacted the members of Living Water that were able to go. We have another trip scheduled for Feb. 2-9, 2013 (February is the best time to go, because it is before the rainy season so mosquitoes are not that great and the temperature is not too hot).

The mission house can sleep up to 40 comfortably with very nice accommodations for any size group. Our group, which included one person in his 70s, was very comfortable with all the accommodations throughout the trip.

If anybody would be interested in going with our group to check out SMI and see if this might be a good fit for their church, please contact me at prtodd@livingwaterlutheran.us. For more information, please visit SMI's website at www.smihaiti.org or contact Kit Brunson at kit@smihaiti.org.

Not Forgetting the Essentials

In Pursuit of the Great Commission

By Pastor Don Brandt

In Part 1 of this topic (published last month) I mentioned the gradual theological shift, among some mainline churches, toward universalism. I was reminded of this trend when reading about a recent theological conference hosted by the Salem (Oregon)-based Westar Institute. Westar describes its mission as “promoting biblical scholarship.” A number of faculty from our local Methodist university lead this organization. The featured speaker at this conference was retired Episcopal Bishop John Shelby Spong. His topic: “Shifting the Christian Paradigm from Salvation and Atonement to Life and Wholeness.” Bishop Spong has always been outspoken and non-traditional in his personal theology, so this title, though disturbing, doesn’t surprise me.

C.S. Lewis once wrote the following: “We all want progress, but if you’re on the wrong road, progress means doing an about-turn and walking back to the right road; in that case, the man who turns back soonest is the most progressive.”

There was a book published in 1972, entitled *Why Conservative Churches are Growing*, by Dean Kelley. This book, commissioned by the National Council of Churches, caused a great deal of controversy. Mr. Kelley was not using the word *conservative* to describe a particular *political* worldview. Rather, he was describing churches with a more conservative *theological* orientation.

One of the book’s themes was that one of the reasons evangelical churches grow is because they pursue ministry priorities that most mainline congregations intentionally reject — they make serious demands of believers when it comes to doctrine and behavior.

Another way to put it: These more “conservative” evangelical congregations tend to advocate for and expect a higher level of commitment from their members — including the commitment to reach out to nonbelievers.

There comes a point — whether in regards to our expectations or our teaching — when accommodation and equivocation become counterproductive.

Dr. Paul Hinlicky, in the March issue of the Lutheran *CORE Connection*, put it well: *“Mainline Protestantism is in trouble because of a theological failure of nerve: absent a coherent and winsome restatement of the faith once delivered to the saints in the face of secular modernity’s creeping claim over all of life, mainline Protestantism sold itself into servitude as a chaplaincy of secularism. That’s the real reason why the ELCA has never met a culturally liberal proposal it didn’t love. It is our sophisticated form of ambulance chasing. But our empty churches . . . are sad witness that such love goes unrequited.”*

I promised, in Part 1 of this topic, some specific suggestions for congregations striving to be more intentional when it comes to evangelistic outreach. Here are four ideas:

1. Regularly challenge and inspire your members to witness. Don’t just do this in your print or on-line communications; raise this challenge in sermons and in your Sunday “minutes for mission” presentations. If you have a sanctuary projection system look for appropriate videos on the subject of evangelism. For example, go to Sermonspice.com and type in “evangelism.” Lots of videos will come up for you to preview; many of them using humor to make their case. (Most videos are three to ten minutes in length.) And consider worship dramas on this subject. I recommend WorshipDrama.com as an outstanding source for five to ten-minute worship drama scripts. And again, you will appreciate the humorous approach to this subject.

2. Offer occasional classes and/or small groups for members who want to learn more about effective witnessing. Back in the early 1980s Augsburg Publishing House published a resource entitled *Witnesses for Christ*. It emphasized the importance

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of Christians crafting their own, personal “faith story.” These faith stories are based on each person’s explanation as to what difference Jesus Christ has made in his or her life. This book is now out of print. However, I’ve come across an excellent, short pamphlet that explains how to create a personal “faith story.” E-mail me and I will send it to you. And one of the most important goals in these witnessing classes? To have participants, on multiple occasions, share (i.e., practice) their faith stories with other class members.

3. Create the kind of worship and hospitality ministries that will dramatically increase the odds that your members will actually invite unchurched friends to worship. For worship content and hospitality suggestions contact me. I will send you previous columns that specifically addressed these particular challenges.

4. Create both fellowship events and special worship celebrations that make it easier and more

likely that your members will bring friends. Too many congregational events are planned with only members in mind. This needs to change.

5. Finally, if you don’t yet have a website, develop one! And if you have one, improve it! Be sure you’ve done everything possible to make your site user-friendly, and make sure you keep the unchurched in mind when it comes to your content.

The Scriptural mandate is so clear and unequivocal. *“Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.” How, then, can they call on the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them? And how can they preach unless they are sent? As it is written, “How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news!”* (Romans 10:13-15)

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.

IMPACT
National Youth Event
Nashville, Tennessee • July 5-8, 2012
For students who have completed grades 8-12.

Equipping young people to live out their faith in Jesus Christ.

On-site food packaging service project with Kids Against Hunger.

www.youthencounter.org/impact
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Youth
ENCOUNTER

‘You are indeed holy, almighty and merciful God’

By Pastor Michael Tavella

Martin Luther omitted the Eucharistic Prayer from his revisions of the Roman Mass of his day: the *Formula Missae* (Luther’s revised Latin Mass) and the *Deutsche Messe* (his German Mass). Instead he included only the Words of Institution in these services.

Luther objected to the sacrificial language contained in the Roman Canon (a word for Eucharistic Prayer), and to the works righteousness associated with its use. In the Offertory Prayer over the bread recited before the Roman Canon, the priest prayed that God the Father would accept this sacrifice made for his sins, for the sins of those present at worship, and for the sins of all the living and the dead.

The language of offering and sacrifice infuse the offertory prayers and the Canon itself. Luther also objected to the notion that the Sacrament was effective for others — including the dead — by its mere performance outside of an individual’s receiving the Sacrament by faith, which Luther regarded as worthy reception (see *The Small Catechism*).

The Small Catechism summarizes the Lutheran confessional position regarding the Sacrament. Luther writes that Holy Communion is the body and blood of Christ given with bread and wine. Here is a rejection of the Roman Catholic doctrine of transubstantiation, which teaches that the bread and wine are obliterated and only the substance of Christ’s body and blood remain.

In the Catechism, Luther explains that we receive the benefits of the Sacrament by believing the words “given and shed for you for the remission of sins” along with eating and drinking. For the Sacrament to be effective for salvation, one must partake of it with trust in the words of Christ.

Luther emphasized the sacramental nature of Holy Communion in opposition to sacrifice. Instead of

writing a new Eucharistic Prayer — as Archbishop Thomas Cranmer did during the reformation in England — Luther simply eliminated it.

The use of the Words of Institution alone was typical Lutheran practice until the publication of the *Service Book and Hymnal* (1958) in which a Eucharistic Prayer was provided as an option. That prayer is included as one of several prayers in the *Lutheran Book of Worship*.

With the inclusion of a canon, Lutheran worship has joined the consensus of the early Church where the use of a Eucharistic Prayer was universal — at least as far as we know from the texts we have received.

The earliest Eucharistic Prayer that has come down to us is found in the *Didache*. Hippolytus provides a Eucharistic Prayer in *The Apostolic Tradition*. In his *First Apology*, Justin Martyr gives a brief description of the Eucharistic Prayer. Other prayers have come down to us from the ancient Church.

Liturgical scholar Luther Reed was instrumental in the inclusion of a Eucharistic Prayer in the *Service Book and Hymnal*. That prayer, like all Eucharistic Prayers, can be divided into several parts. Here is an outline beginning after the *Sanctus*:

1. The introductory praise takes up the theme of the holiness and glory of God found in the preceding *Sanctus*. We praise God for our salvation in Jesus Christ. Eucharistic Prayers vary in the content of the post-Sanctus narrative that precedes the Words of Institution. Some express at length God’s acts in creation and redemption. A summary of the history of Israel leading up to Christ is a feature in some of the prayers (For example, the LBW prayer “Holy God, mighty Lord, gracious Father . . .”) John 3:16 forms the substance of the narrative in the prayer we are considering.

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2. The Words of Institution are cited in some form. These Words must always be used in any celebration of the Sacrament. Variations in the wording of the Words of Institution in Eucharistic Prayers reflect differences in the biblical accounts of these Words. What Christ said over the bread and cup interpret the meaning of Christ's death on the cross.



3. The *anamnesis* is the remembrance of the great acts of salvation found in Christ along with our praise and thanksgiving, an acceptable sacrifice to God in an evangelical Eucharistic Prayer. This section of the prayer takes up Jesus' command to "Do this in remembrance of me."

4. In the *epiclesis*, we call upon the Spirit, and also the Word in the prayer we are considering, to bless us and the gifts of bread and wine. It must be noted that Lutherans believe that the consecration takes place at the Words of Institution, not at the *epiclesis*.

5. The benefits of the reception of Communion are recited. What is primary is the forgiveness of sins that leads to our heavenly inheritance.

6. The prayer ends with a Trinitarian doxology.

The Eucharistic Prayer has a Trinitarian structure. The prayer is addressed to the Father. In the SBH prayer with which Reed had much to do, the doxology takes the form of a naming of the Holy Trinity. In other prayers, we address the Father and end in praise of Him through the Son in the unity of the Holy Spirit.

What is the justification for a Eucharistic Prayer in Lutheran practice, when for so many centuries the Lutheran Church has used only the Words of Institution?

First, it is the ecumenical practice reaching back into the early days of the Church.

Second, evangelical Eucharistic Prayers refrain from the use of the notion of sacrifice as found in the Roman Canon to which Luther and the other reformers so much objected.

Third, Eucharistic Prayers contain the narrative of our salvation and the faith of the Church.

Fourth, the notion of Sacrament — the bestowing of God's grace through word and sign — is maintained in this practice.

In his monumental book *The Lutheran Liturgy*, Luther Reed gives a rationale for the inclusion of a Eucharistic Prayer in the Lutheran liturgy.

The *Lutheran Book of Worship* introduced offertory prayers to be said before the beginning of the Eucharistic Prayer. In the first of these prayers, which begins "Merciful Father," the word, *offer*, is used. The prayer mentions that we offer what God has first given us, which is represented in the monetary gifts, the Eucharistic elements, and our very selves. These offerings are united to Christ "who offered Himself for us." Is this not a return to the notion of sacrifice? We do not offer Christ Himself, but offer our praise, our gifts, and ourselves. In this sense, sacrificial elements in the Eucharistic Prayer are evangelical.

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We must always remember that the primary thing in the Sacrament is Christ's coming to us in the Word and the signs of bread and wine. The sacrifice is Jesus who offered Himself once and for all for the sins of the world. We obey Christ's command by remembering His sacrifice in the Eucharistic celebration.

The sacramental nature of the Eucharist must always be at the forefront. Our sacrifice is a response to God's grace. In *Examination of the Council of Trent, Part II*, Martin Chemnitz writes an excellent summary of an evangelical understanding of sacrifice in the Eucharist that is based on ancient Christian thought and practice.

The salutation, Preface, and *Sanctus/Benedictus* follow the Offertory Prayer and precede the main body of the Eucharistic Prayer. The salutation draws people's attention to the significance of what is about to happen and is a call to lift hearts to the Lord and to render thanks to Him.

The pastor then proceeds to sing or say the Proper Preface. The Preface, beginning with "*Vere dignum et iustum est*" — translated in LBW as "It is indeed right and salutary" — was not part of the earliest prayers. *The Didache* does not cite it nor does Hippolytus in *The Apostolic Tradition*. The *Sanctus* and *Benedictus* are also later additions.

A Proper Preface in which the pastor declares that giving thanks to the Lord at all times is right and salutary includes the seasonal theme. The Preface joins the Church to the hosts of heaven in their unending praise of God expressed in the *Sanctus* and *Benedictus* that follow the Preface.

While a Eucharistic Prayer is not required in Lutheran usage, its presence within our liturgy testifies to the catholic commitment of our Church. Its use has been the common practice of the Church from the earliest times.

Luther's solution to the errors of the Roman Canon is not the only proper one. Cranmer's response is an evangelical alternative. An evangelical Eucharistic Prayer conforms to Lutheran confession.

Cranmer devised a beautiful Eucharistic Prayer. Variations of his Prayer written for the *First Prayer Book of Edward VI* are found in the prayer books that followed. Within Cranmer's prayer is a statement of an evangelical view of sacrifice. He highlights the once-and-for-all sacrifice of Christ. The sacrifice includes our praise and thanksgiving and the gifts of bread and wine that we bring. And, we present ourselves as a living sacrifice, a text based on Romans 12. In the celebration of the Sacrament we "do this" in remembrance of Christ, as He commanded.

In Lutheran prayers, sacrifice is mentioned with more circumspection. But, the concept is present. In the Prayer under consideration, we ask God to accept our praise and thanksgiving. In the mention of God's own gifts of bread and wine, we find a reference to sacrifice, but our sacrifice is not an offering of Christ Himself, who had offered Himself once and for all for our sins.

This discussion of sacrifice is not intended to obscure in any way the primary sacramental character of Holy Communion. Holy Communion is the Word of God with the signs of bread and wine for us to eat and drink. We believe and trust that God gives us the forgiveness of sins therein. No merit accrues by our performance of the Sacrament. The doctrine of justification lies behind our view of the Sacrament, as Luther insists.

The Eucharistic Prayer is a beautiful part of our heritage that takes us back to the early days of the Church. Its rehearsal of our redemption (and a narrative of creation and salvation history in some prayers), its praise and doxology, its beauty and dignity lend so much to the worship of the Church (see Luther Reed). We are truly beneficiaries of the Great Tradition of the Church.

Next time we will continue our discussion of the Eucharistic Prayer with a special emphasis on its eschatological orientation.

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.

The Nature and Structure of Leadership in the Church

The Essence of 'Episcope'

Bishop John Bradosky addressed the International Mission and Theological Conference hosted by the Ethiopian Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus on the nature and structure of leadership in the Church. Here is the text of his address:

On behalf of your brothers and sisters in Christ who are a part of the North American Lutheran Church I bring you greetings, President Idossa, General Secretary Ofga'a, distinguished guests, pastors and lay leaders of the Ethiopian Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus. Thank you for this opportunity to be with you and to talk about leadership in the body of Christ from an evangelical Lutheran perspective. Thank you even more for the development and continued growth of our relationship with EECMY. We are blessed and strengthened as a result of our mutual commitment to work together to strengthen the bold witness of Christ in this world and in our respective cultures.

While much of what I have to say has to do generally with the nature and structure of leadership in the Church, I will be speaking most specifically about the implications for the office of ministry and even more specifically regarding the essential nature of oversight or "episcope."

Let us begin at the beginning. Genesis gives expression to the fact that the God of creation is a God of order. Creation is a process that brings order out of chaos. Order creates structure. Adam and Eve are the first to be given responsibility for providing oversight. They are to rule over the earth and all its creatures in a responsible way. God provides oversight for Adam and Eve and their life in the Garden of Eden and Adam and Eve provide oversight for the earth and all its creatures. This order and oversight are designed by God to bless and equip them to lead their family and properly care for the earth and its creatures. However, it soon becomes clear that the nature of evil is bound up in replacing the order and structure God provides with chaos. Sin is rebellion against God's authority and oversight. It is the pretense that we can know what God knows and can provide our own oversight and direction for living, thereby excluding a relationship of faith in Him.

In Exodus 18, Moses seeks the advice of his father-in-law, Jethro, because he cannot fulfill the responsibility of judging all the cases of such a large group of people. Jethro advises Moses to appoint people over 10's, 50's, 100's and 1000's, creating a structure that trained and empowered people for service at various levels. Only the cases that couldn't be settled at any of those levels made it to Moses. This order was designed to care for people, not to create an organization or institution. Yet it is clear that creating an orderly process also brought about structure and hierarchy that was helpful and effective.

There are many other examples of order and structure that are instituted to provide discipline, structure and effectiveness. The movement of Israel in the wilderness, the order of the military during the time of Joshua, the order for the tribal confederation, establishing a king, the building and structure for the temple in Jerusalem, the structure for those serving in the temple, are all examples in the Old Testament of structure that is introduced to assist God's people. Even after the period of captivity, we see order and structure emerge during the time of the restoration and rebuilding of Jerusalem, the temple and the walls.

The Scriptures also bear testimony that people often struggle against order and structure especially when that structure means that someone will be exercising authority over us. We don't mind structure in general but will resist if we must obey the judgment of another person who has been given authority beyond ourselves. Because of our sinful and rebellious nature, our fallen world, Christians today still struggle with similar issues. Often, I hear Christians say they want to be responsible and accountable to Christ alone, but not to any other person. My experience has taught me that if you can't be obedient to a person who has responsibility for your spiritual well-being, you probably will not be attentive to the voice of Christ either. It is for this very reason that one of the commandments includes honoring your father and mother. They have been given the task of providing for your spiritual growth, physical and emotional well-being. Their authority in our lives comes from God and they are accountable to God. God has given them

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Bishop John Bradosky

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oversight in our lives so that we can be nurtured, cared for and grow in faith. It is a matter of necessity as no infant can survive without such oversight and support. It is not a matter of power and control but of love and grace. There are times when children may struggle with the role of parents and times when parents are not accountable to the Lord who gave them this responsibility of oversight. However, if a child refuses to accept the guidance of a loving parent functioning under the oversight of the Lord, we know that child is headed for trouble, difficulty and problems that will adversely affect the entire community.

My point is simple. If you cannot accept the authority and oversight that Christ has given to another on your behalf then you are bound to have great difficulty accepting the authority and oversight of Christ Himself as the authority and oversight have the same source. Those who resist this source of authority and oversight want to be responsible to no one else. They always start with the assumption that Christ must agree with them so whatever they decide must come from Christ and be blessed by Christ. This is precisely how so many heresies plagued the Church in the past and continue to be manifest throughout the Church today.

I must confess it is difficult to trust the authority and leadership of others. We have all experienced so many bad leaders that we begin to believe that good leaders must not exist. Many have authority that is not God's doing and many have inappropriately exercised the authority they do have. Because of sin, we all need oversight, accountability and the commitment to faithfully exercise our responsibility as followers of Jesus. Yet the very thing we need, we resist because of our rebellion, original sin, our fallen state.

It is impossible in this limited time period to do justice to all the examples in the Scripture that would be helpful to consider regarding this topic. Let us turn to the New Testament and a very important experience and observation of Jesus. In the Gospel of Luke, chapter 7, we read a fascinating story of a Roman centurion who is pleading for the life of his servant. Luke 7:1-10:

When Jesus had finished saying all this in the hearing of the people, He entered Capernaum. There a centurion's servant, whom his master valued highly, was sick and about to die. The centurion heard of Jesus and sent some elders of the Jews to Him, asking Him to come and heal his servant. When they came to Jesus, they pleaded earnestly with Him, "This man deserves to have you do this, because he loves our nation and has built our synagogue." So Jesus went with them. He was not far from the house when the centurion sent friends to say to Him: "Lord, don't trouble yourself, for I do not deserve to have you come under my roof. That is why I did not even consider myself worthy to come to you. But say the word, and my servant will be healed. For I myself am a man under authority, with soldiers under me. I tell this one, 'Go,' and he goes; and that one, 'Come,' and he comes. I say to my servant, 'Do this,' and he does it." When Jesus heard this, He was amazed at him, and turning to the crowd following Him, He said, "I tell you, I have not found such great faith even in Israel." Then the men who had been sent returned to the house and found the servant well.

The centurion understands the proper use of authority, the chain of command. He is a man under authority. He has someone over him. He is accountable to the person over him. At the same time he has other people who are under him and they are accountable to him. No one can properly exercise authority without being under authority. No one can hold others accountable unless they are accountable. Here is a man with great power over many soldiers, but he humbles himself before Jesus and sends his friends to tell Jesus that he is not worthy of Jesus exerting unnecessary effort on his behalf. He is not even worthy to have Jesus come into his home. He ascribes authority to Jesus and makes himself and his servant accountable to Jesus. He would do whatever Jesus asks him to do. He believes that if Jesus gives the command, whatever He commands will be accomplished. Jesus makes a most remarkable statement. He says He has not found faith like this in all of Israel.

We are not unlike Israel. We want to wrestle God's authority away from Him. We want to argue with God about asserting ourselves, our wisdom, our thoughts, our ways, our morality, our church, our needs, our desires. Jesus points this out as He weeps over Jerusalem.

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Matthew 23:37-39: "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you who kill the prophets and stone those sent to you, how often I have longed to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were not willing. Look, your house is left to you desolate."

Faithfulness is built on obedience, accountability, being responsible. The nature of the Body of Christ is being obedient to others who are over us in Christ and exercising authority over others through the ministry that is ours in Christ. This demands being accountable to others and inviting others into relationships of accountability with you, being responsible to others and demanding responsible behavior from others. The Apostle Paul reminds us in his letters to the Church comparing the Body of Christ to a human body that the appropriate functioning of the body cannot happen with radical independence (the hand doing one thing, the foot doing something else, the eye attending to one thing and the ear to another). The effective functioning of the body requires the coordinated and integrated effort of all parts working together. The structure of the body must be responsive and obedient or it will destroy itself.

Jesus modeled this understanding as He related to His disciples. They experienced Jesus' commitment to the authority of His Father even as He exercised authority over His disciples. The prayers of Jesus give expression to this. His agony in the Garden of Gethsemane and His parable of the vine express that same reality. The Father is the vine dresser, Jesus is the vine and the disciples are the branches. It occurs again in His priestly prayer in John 17. While the structure differentiates it also unifies. While there are differences between the Father, Son and the disciples regarding power and authority, there is within the differentiated persons a greater sense of unity. The unity does not come by abandoning the structure or identity of each but by affirming it.

The nature of discipleship is a structure that requires obedience, accountability and the demand for responsible action. Jesus taught His first disciples and equipped them to become the leaders of His Church. (I will spend far more time with this subject in my second presentation) Jesus exercised authority over His disciples. He taught them about the necessity of obedience. In fact, He said that obedience is an essential quality of love. "If you love me you will obey my commands." Once He had trained the first disciples, He sent them out to make disciples of others. This meant that they would have authority and responsibility over those they were equipping as disciples. In order to be effective in making disciples of others, they had to

remain under the authority of Christ and His teaching. Being under the authority of others and exercising proper authority over others is the foundation of discipleship and therefore the structure of the New Testament Church.

As the Church grew and spread, the exercise of this authority became essential. We see it in Acts as the leaders came together in Jerusalem to decide about new believers and the issue of circumcision. We see it in the epistles and Paul's missionary journeys as heresies are confronted and corrected, as immorality is rejected and as the one true, holy and apostolic faith is affirmed. We see this process in the calling of leaders, the laying on of hands, the consecration of individuals for ministry and service. (Deacons in Acts 6)

During the early growth of the Church, it is clear in the Scriptures that there is not one divinely appointed system or structure that is consistently applied in all places. During the time of the Apostles there are local ministries of presbyter-bishops and deacons and a general ministry of Apostles and prophets. The term elder (*presbyteros*) for a Christian leader occurs along with deacons, or servant ministers, and includes both men and women. The term *episcopos*, overseer or bishop, occurs numerous times. One meaning is visitation. The implications are that the overseer or bishop provides oversight by visiting, observing and interacting with those entrusted to their care (Luke 19:44, 1 Peter 2:12). It is also referred to in the Scriptures as an office or position of oversight (1 Timothy 3:1 and Acts 1:20). The same term is also applied to Christ as the Shepherd and Guardian of our souls (1 Peter 2:25).

Philippians 1:1 address all the saints, the bishops and deacons. 1 Thessalonians 5:12 refers to the *episcopos* as "those who labor among you and are over you in the Lord and admonish you." 1 Timothy 3 gives a minimum list of personal requirements for those who desire the office of oversight: An apt teacher, good manager of his own household. Titus 1:5,7 provide qualities for a presbyter-bishop as providing instruction in sound doctrine.

The function of Church leaders is to present and defend the Word of God against alternative views in the Church and in the world. Bishops were to be a bulwark against heresy. From all the Scriptural references it seems clear that the *episcopoi*, bishops, carried out an important leadership function in the life of the New Testament Church, teaching, managing, admonishing, and generally serving in the life and mission of the Church. A little later, there is evidence to support the concept of a single bishop for each community that stood in apostolic succession and was a defender of the orthodox Christian faith.

Historically, in the early part of the second century there is a three-fold office of ministry that appears, consisting of bishops, presbyters and deacons that soon becomes nearly universal. The language of the early Church fathers also attaches the word “succession” of the Bishops from the Apostles. The goal of our quest to find the best form and structure for leadership in the Church today is not an archeological excavation in which we are trying to reclaim an ancient form of structure but rather to understand and reclaim the commitment of the Church to the evangelical proclamation of the Gospel. It is to understand how the structure facilitated the mission.

There were great problems that arose in both the leadership and structure of the Church once it became synonymous with the Roman Empire. From that point on, the line between the kingdoms of this world and the Kingdom of God were blurred. Institutionalization followed. The misuse and abuse of power increased and became commonplace. Leaders oppressed the people they were called to serve. The Gospel itself was compromised. The Reformation and our identity as Lutherans are in response to such problems.

The corrective and directive power for the Church is the Word. The content of the Gospel and the structure of the Church that embodies the Gospel are informed and bound by the Scripture. Everything we do is centered on the Word of God. The power is in the Word itself not in any structure or organizational device and not in any office. The Augsburg Confession clarifies our understanding. While Article 4 clarifies our understanding of justification by grace through faith in Jesus Christ, Article 5 declares how such justifying faith is to be obtained. It is through the public proclamation of the Word and the celebration of the sacraments.

God instituted the office of ministry so that through the public proclamation of the Gospel and the sacraments the Holy Spirit will work faith in those who hear the Gospel, and receive the Means of Grace. The fact that God has chosen to come through external means — the Gospel and the sacraments — thereby establishes an office that is divinely instituted. The office is given as a gift and is instituted, which means its full potential is made available in the proper exercising of the office of ministry. This office is divine in its nature and origin but is passed on through the lives of people: the Apostles, the first followers and disciples of Jesus. It is passed on from them to the rest of the Church.

Augsburg Confession Article 7 reminds us that a uniform structure is not necessary for the unity of the Church. Lutheran churches have entrusted the episcopal ministry to persons whose titles and duties may differ. The diversity of these structures has never been regarded as divisive for the communion of Lutheran churches. It is

impossible for our study and conversation to lead us to the conclusion that there is only one structure or only one means of providing oversight in the leadership structure of the Church.

The Augsburg Confession takes us to Article 14 which is about the public ordering of this office and is therefore both logical and a consequence of the establishment of the office of ministry. “Nobody should publicly teach or preach or administer the sacraments in the church without a regular call.” It is a matter of divine call to a ministry in which God is at work. And, since it is a public office, the call can only occur through the Church. One does not appoint oneself to public ministry. It is a special call not because of the office or the individual or the fact that one is called by God to this service. What makes it special is the content of the Gospel to be delivered. It is because of the preciousness of the Gospel that those who are called to this service are also highly valued by the Body of Christ. The regular call involved the laying on of hands and the involvement of bishops in the ordination process. The involvement of the bishop was a symbol of the work of the larger church body beyond the congregation. In the public office of ministry, the call came through a local congregation but the office to which the person was called represented the public proclamation of the Gospel and the administration of the sacraments for the sake of the whole Church. The involvement of the bishop gave witness to this larger level of accountability and the necessity of oversight that transcended the local congregation.

All of this is for the sake of good order and that order also makes Article 28 essential. The office of oversight — bishops — must also be accountable to and responsible for the whole Church. Many would correctly argue that this article brings the authority and power of the office back under proper limits. Article 28 connects the office of bishop with the office of ministry of the evangelical pastor: to preach the Gospel, to forgive sins, judge doctrine, condemn doctrine contrary to the Gospel and exclude the ungodly from the Christian community. It is clear that the highest exercise of authority in the Church is the preaching of the Gospel. There is nothing beyond that. This is the ultimate work of bishops: to see to it that the Gospel is properly proclaimed. In many ways, the leaders of the Reformation saw the difference between the office of pastor and bishop in the size of the jurisdiction. In some ways, the office of pastor functions as a bishop over the people of the congregation, providing oversight. The office of the bishop provides oversight for a number of pastors and congregations. The size and scope of this work in the structure of the Church is regulated by the Church for the sake of good order. Bishops are called to embody the Gospel and represent the unity of the Church. They must visit, care, support and advance the mission of the churches through their oversight and

ministry. They offer advice and protect the Church from false teaching. They encourage the training, calling and placing of pastors. They exercise discipline for pastors and congregations when there are situations that call for such actions. They represent the Church in ecumenical concerns, finding ways to work together, strengthening our witness to the world by expressing the unity of the Body of Christ as the Gospel is proclaimed in word and deed. This is a ministry of leadership and spiritual supervision.

Article 28 does not remove the necessity of the office of oversight. It does not dismiss the office of bishop as unnecessary or irrelevant. Luther and other leaders of the Reformation did not attempt to eliminate the office but to insure that it functioned in ways consistent with the evangelical proclamation of the Gospel and the mission and ministry of the Church.

I will add only a brief word about apostolic succession or continuity. During the time of the Reformation an orderly transmission of this ministry through episcopal ordination was no longer possible in some countries. While it is an important sign, what it points to is even more important. Apostolic continuity is preserved in the faithful proclamation of the Gospel, the preservation of the orthodox Christian faith and the commitment to the evangelical mission of the Church.

Let me summarize my encouragement to you as you consider the adoption of the title of bishop for the office of oversight in your structure.

1. Order and structure are essential and a part of God's creative involvement. They are both implicit and explicit in the Scriptural witness of both the Old and New Testament.

2. Oversight is essential for discipleship. Jesus exercised oversight in the formation of His disciples and Jesus empowers His disciples to exercise oversight over others.

3. The word *episcopus* is the word the Church used to describe the office of oversight in the Scriptures. This word is properly translated "bishop." It is a Biblical term for an essential component of leadership in the structure of the Church.

4. For most of the life of the Church, the three-fold office of ministry was utilized and included the office of oversight by bishops, the ministry of pastors and the ordered service of deacons.

5. The Lutheran Confessions preserve the office of bishop. The reformers did not abolish the office but provided for the correct function and proper authority ascribed to it by the nature of the Gospel itself.

6. Many of the other words used to describe leadership in the Church are not Scriptural and are often grounded in secular concepts and systems. Some have said that originally the Church was an intimate fellowship with Jesus. In Greece, it became a philosophy. In Rome, it became an institution. In Europe, it became a culture. In the United States, it became just another not-for-profit corporation. If we are fighting against the secularization of the Church, doesn't it send a confusing message when we adopt terms for leadership that reflect the secular world. The use of the term *bishop* keeps it Biblical and confessional.

7. We should not make our decision about the correct terminology and structure based on our personal experience and feelings. We have all been plagued by bad bishops or leaders from around us and within. We should not make these decisions based on our experience with the Orthodox, the Catholics, or the ELCA. When we make decisions in these ways, we enter into the same lack of critical thinking that led the ELCA into unfaithful decisions regarding sexuality. Instead of using the Scriptures as the norm, they made their decision based on the experience of individuals and their feelings about individuals. All one had to do is listen to the debate and you could see how the Bible and the Confessions were abandoned for the feelings and experiences of a few. The Scriptures and the Confessions should norm our faith and life, not our emotions or the influence of others.

8. The use of the term *Bishop* brings congruity with a majority of world Christians and a growing number of Lutheran churches.

It has been my pleasure to share with you a perspective as the Bishop of the North American Lutheran Church regarding episcopacy, oversight and the office of bishop. I encourage you to utilize the Biblical and historic words from an evangelical and historic church. If the term has been abused, then let's redeem it with the power and authority of the Gospel so that the office of bishop can reflect the Gospel and glorify Christ as bishops faithfully serve Christ and His Church.

I am certain you will decide what is best for you according to the Scriptures and the Confessions. Even if your decision requires a time for education and additional study, it will be time well spent in avoiding secularization and continuing to maintain your focus on the Gospel and the proclamation of that Gospel to the ends of the earth. To that end you will remain in my prayers.

May the Lord continue to bless and strengthen us as we journey together faithfully following Jesus and may the Holy Spirit continue to fill and renew us by providing the wisdom and direction we need.



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 Director

Pastor Gemechis Buba
gbuba@thenalc.org

Ministry Coordinator

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

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

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