

NALC congregation affected by Colorado forest fire

Black Forest Lutheran Church, an NALC congregation in Colorado Springs, is in the heart of the area burned by the largest forest fire in Colorado history.

The church building was spared by the fires, but destruction is all around the area. Seventeen of the homes destroyed by the fire belonged to members of Black Forest Lutheran Church.

The Black Forest Fire began on June 11. It had destroyed over 500 homes and burned more than 22 square miles by June 20. At the high point of the fire, nearly 40,000 people were evacuated — including half of Black Forest Lutheran's members.



A U.S. flag hangs in front of a burning structure in the Black Forest of Colorado on June 12. More than 500 homes were destroyed by the fire. (U.S. Air Force photo by Master Sgt. Christopher DeWitt)



A C-130 airplane departs the Black Forest Fire June 12 after dropping fire retardant. An Army CH-47 Chinook helicopter can be seen scooping up water in an effort to aid firefighting efforts. (Photo by Travis Leland)

Pastor Ken Hohag was away for a family wedding and about to begin a sabbatical leave, but he has returned to provide ministry to members of the congregation and community.

“The devastation after the fire is hard to explain in words,” said Pastor Gemechis Buba, NALC Assistant to the Bishop for Missions, who was in Colorado and was scheduled to preach for worship at Black Forest Lutheran on Sunday, June 16. The

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congregation was in the evacuation area, so they were unable to hold worship at their location. Bethel Lutheran Church, a nearby LCMC congregation, invited Black Forest members to worship with them that Sunday.

“I conducted a healing service on Sunday at Bethel Lutheran congregation, where all of our Black Forest members and members of Bethel were gathered for this service. It was a large gathering that started with a community breakfast, and the service was full of



Firefighters battle the flames with ground efforts at the Black Forest Fire. (Photo by Air Force Capt. Darin Overstreet)



The smoke from the Black Forest Fire seen from a distance.

prayer, remembering promises of God, many worship songs, and Communion. I preached, prayed, and served Communion,” Pastor Buba said.

Financial contributions to support the relief efforts following the fire may be given through NALC Disaster Response at www.thenalc.org or sent to:

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

Black Forest Lutheran Church has a long history of mission work both locally and globally. Their members will be responding to those in their area devastated by the fires. They are forming service teams to help in the cleanup effort. An article describing some of their other mission efforts is printed on Pages 16-17.



Registration open for Convocations and theological conference

Registration is now open for the NALC Convocation Aug. 8-9 in Pittsburgh, Pa.

The NALC Convocation is one of four events that will take place Aug. 6-9 at the Sheraton Station Square Hotel in Pittsburgh. The NALC Convocation will be preceded by Lutheran CORE's Convocation on Aug. 6 and by the annual Theological Conference sponsored by Lutheran CORE and the NALC on Aug. 6-7. The Women of the NALC will meet on Aug. 7.



The skyline of Pittsburgh with the Sheraton Station Square Hotel, site of the Convocations and theological conference, in the foreground.

You may register for the events at www.thenalc.org. Online registration is the preferred method of registration. The registration fee for the NALC Convocation is \$95. The Theological Conference registration fee is \$115, and the Lutheran CORE Convocation fee is \$70.

The registration fee for each event includes lunch during that event. The NALC Convocation fee also includes dinner on Thursday, Aug. 8, but lunch on Friday, Aug. 9, is not included.

Special rates for hotel rooms are available for those attending the Convocations and Theological Conference. Details are posted on the NALC website.

The Convocation is the annual meeting of the NALC. Delegates will receive information and reports and make decisions about the life and ministry of the NALC. Among the reports will be an update on the NALC's application for membership in the Lutheran World Federation and a proposal for the theological education of future NALC pastors.

Voting delegates for the NALC Convocation include lay people elected by their congregations and all NALC pastors. Each congregation is entitled to at

least one lay delegate. Those who are not delegates are welcome to attend as visitors.

The Convocation will elect one pastor and one lay person to four-year terms on the Executive Council. The Executive Council functions as the board of directors for the NALC, providing leadership for the church body between the annual Convocations. Four lay people and nine pastors have been nominated for the Executive Council. Biographical information on the nominees was printed in the May *NALC News*.

One of the highlights of the Convocation will be the recognition of Pastor Herb Hafermann for 50 years of mission work in Tanzania. Representatives of the 6-million-member Evangelical Lutheran Church in Tanzania are scheduled to be present to join in the celebration of Pastor Hafermann's work.

Another highlight will be a festive Holy Communion service at First Presbyterian Church, a beautiful Gothic edifice not far from Station Square which will feature music by the Westmont College Choir of Santa Barbara, Calif., and be preceded by a 30-minute organ and choral prelude.

NALC members responding to tornados in Oklahoma

Pastor Keith Falk of Peace Lutheran Church, an NALC congregation in Edmond, Okla., was asked to share his reflections on disaster response efforts immediately following the tornados in Oklahoma that killed 24 people.

Moore, Okla., a city which received terrible damage from the May 20 tornado, is about 25 miles south of Edmond. Both cities are part of the Oklahoma City metropolitan area. Officials estimate that more than 12,000 homes have been damaged and put total damage at \$2 billion.

Less than six days after the tornado that went through our city of Edmond (doing little damage) and doing serious damage in Carney and other communities ...

Less than five days after the devastating tornado that went through Moore, Little Axe, Shawnee, and other communities ...



Lutherans serving meals to Department of Transportation works assisting in cleanup from tornados in Oklahoma.

Not only were we showered with phone calls and e-mails from people all over North America wanting to help immediately after the May 20 tornado, but Peace Lutheran Church hosted a group from St. John Lutheran Church, an NALC congregation in Boerne, Texas, Memorial Day weekend.



The people from St. John came to work and serve our Lord Jesus by serving others, and several members from Peace joined them. Initially working with St. John Lutheran Church, a Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod congregation in Moore, we served families, volunteer crews, and work crews from the Oklahoma Department of Transportation.

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Throughout the weekend they helped clear debris, took people to shop for needed items, and did ministry near and dear to Lutheran hearts — they made food! A vital support ministry in disaster relief is providing food, both for displaced families and volunteer workers. Just as important as meeting material needs is making connections with people, sharing the love of Christ Jesus.

At the end of each work day, members of Peace graciously opened their homes so that the work crews from St. John could shower. We worshiped together on Sunday, shared meals, laughter, and lively conversation. It was truly a blessing for both St. John and Peace to work and serve together.



We at Peace Lutheran are ready to host work crews as congregations respond to this disaster. We already have work crews scheduled to come from NALC congregations in Arlington, Texas; Eagle Grove, Iowa; Elderton, Pa.; Gothenberg, Neb.; Hawkins, Wis.; and Thomasboro, Ill.

Volunteers continue to be needed to help with disaster cleanup and rebuilding efforts. The best way to arrange work projects is through the website www.servemoore.com or by calling 866-484-3500.

If you are interested in coming down to volunteer, Peace Lutheran Church can provide meals, showers and a place to sleep. Please contact Pastor Keith Falk at



pastorkeith@peace-lutheran.net or 405-341-3205 for available dates or if you have any questions.

Financial contributions may be given through NALC Disaster Response at www.thenalc.org or sent to:

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

Peace Lutheran Church was a drop-off point for material donations immediately following the storm. At this time physical donations are not needed, but you may donate gift cards for discount stores like Target and Walmart or building centers like Lowe's and Home Depot. Gift cards may be sent to:

Peace Lutheran Church
2600 E. Danforth Road
Edmond, OK 73034-6609



Photos by members of St. John Lutheran Church, Boerne, Texas, and Peace Lutheran Church, Edmond, Okla.

NALC joins in ecumenical affirmation of marriage

Seeking to provide clarity and express mutual agreement on what Scripture teaches about marriage and sexuality, the North American Lutheran Church has joined the Anglican Church in North America (ACNA), Lutheran Church—Canada (LCC) and the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod in releasing “An Affirmation of Marriage.”

The statement is the result of a landmark ecumenical summit May 3-5 at Church of the Holy Communion in Dallas, Texas.

The theme of the meeting was “Biblical Teaching on Marriage and Sexuality.” Presentations and discussion focused on the shared historic understanding of marriage as a holy estate, divinely created by God to be the union of man and woman.

The ecumenical summit and Affirmation of Marriage are the result of ongoing multi-lateral consultations among the four church bodies.

As North American culture wrestles with issues of marriage and family, the participants of this ecumenical dialogue sought clarity and agreement on Scriptural teaching, with the intention of developing a common statement. A draft was presented and discussed at the summit, and the final form of the statement was determined in the weeks following the gathering.

The statement is intended to provide clear, concise instruction to clergy and members of the participating denominations, but also to be an unequivocal affirmation of Biblical teaching with regard to marriage between male and female as the essential and unchanging foundation for home, family, church, and society.



Participants in the ecumenical summit, from left: Mark Galli; Bishop Ray Sutton; Pastor David Wendel; Prof. John Pless; Pastor Mark Chavez; Pastor Ken Hennings; Dr. Fred Baue; Dr. Joel Lehenbauer; Prof. John Stephenson; Pastor Larry Vogel; and Dr. Jonathan S. Riches.

“Our Lord immensely blessed us in these Anglican-Lutheran consultations,” said Pastor Mark Chavez, NALC General Secretary. “The Lord has gathered us as one in Him with strong agreement in our confession of the Christian faith. Our agreement includes the Biblical norms for marriage and sexuality. I am hopeful for our common statement and for mutually presenting a clear Biblical teaching of marriage and sexuality throughout our churches that will be a blessing for all of North America.”

The Rt. Rev. Ray Sutton, a bishop of the Anglican Church in North America and host for the summit, said, “God calls His people in every generation to proclaim the clarity of the Gospel to the points of greatest confusion. In our generation, marriage and sexuality have become the points of cultural confusion that keep the western world from grasping the most important image of God’s relation to His people, marriage. Confessional believers must learn again to speak with one voice.”

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“The Affirmation on Marriage is now provided to NALC pastors and congregations as a positive teaching tool,” said Pastor David Wendel, NALC Assistant to the Bishop for Ministry and Ecumenism. “Our prayer is that the common statement will be studied in adult classes, used in catechetical instruction, and perhaps even shared in marriage preparation and enrichment seminars.”

The document was approved by NALC Bishop John Bradosky; President Robert Bugbee of the Lutheran Church—Canada; Archbishop Robert Duncan of the Anglican Church in North America; and President Matthew Harrison of the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod.

“We now commend this Affirmation of Marriage to our denominational bodies — the NALC, the

ACNA, the LCC and the LCMS. We trust that God will use it to strengthen and upbuild the gift of marriage between one man and one woman as the foundation for families, communities, congregations and the world,” NALC Bishop John Bradosky said.

Other participants in the summit were the Rev. Dr. Frederic Baue (LCMS); the Rev. Kenneth M. Hennings, president of the Texas District (LCMS); the Rev. Dr. Joel Lehenbauer, Executive Director of the Commission on Theology and Church Relations (LCMS); the Rev. Professor John Pless, Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne, Ind. (LCMS); the Very Rev. Dr. Jonathan S. Riches, Reformed Episcopal Seminary (ACNA); Professor John Stephenson, Concordia Theological Seminary, St. Catharines, Ontario (LCC), the Rev. Larry Vogel, Associate Executive Director of the Commission on Theology and Church Relations, (LCMS).

Theological Conference is Aug. 6-7

“On Being the Church in These Precarious Times” is the theme of the annual Theological Conference sponsored by the North American Lutheran Church and Lutheran CORE Aug. 6-7 at the Sheraton Station Square Hotel in Pittsburgh, Pa.

Speakers for the theological conference include:

+ The Rev. Dr. Carl E. Braaten, professor emeritus of systematic theology at Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago and former executive director of the Center for Catholic and Evangelical Theology.

+ The Rev. Dr. James A. Nestingen, professor emeritus of church history at Luther Seminary in St. Paul, Minn.

+ The Rev. Dr. Frank Senn, liturgical scholar and pastor of Immanuel Lutheran Church in Evanston, Ill., and Senior of the Society of the Holy Trinity.

+ The Rev. Dr. Stephan Turnbull, senior pastor of First Lutheran Church in White Bear Lake, Minn.

+ Dr. David Yeago, professor of systematic theology in the Department of Lutheran Studies at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary in Charlotte, N.C.

+ The Rev. Dr. Sarah Hinlicky Wilson, assistant research professor at the Institute for Ecumenical Research in Strasbourg, France, and editor of the theological journal, *Lutheran Forum*.

+ The Rev. Dr. Nathan Howard Yoder, pastor of St. Martin’s Lutheran Church, Maiden, N.C.

Bishop Bradosky to host Holy Land tour

NALC Bishop John Bradosky will host a tour of the Holy Land Nov. 12-21. The tour of Israel and Jordan includes Jerusalem, Bethlehem, Nazareth, and many sites in Galilee. It is scheduled to leave from Columbus, Ohio, but arrangements can be made for other departure cities.

For more information contact Pam Charas at 937-434-0993 or mcharas@earthlink.net or Jerusalem Tours at 888-373-8687 or visit their website: www.jerusalemstours.com.

An Affirmation of Marriage

The Sacred Scriptures teach that in the beginning the blessed Trinity instituted marriage to be the life-long union of one man and one woman (Genesis 2:24; Matthew 19:4-6), to be held in honor by all and kept pure (Hebrews 13:4; 1 Thessalonians 4:2-5). God's Word assures us that each time one man and one woman join themselves together in the union of the marriage commitment and relationship, God Himself has joined them as one. It is important to see that marriage is not only a grace-filled institution of the Church, but part of the very fabric of God's creation which extends to every time and place on earth and includes every man and woman who are joined together in this "one flesh" commitment and bond. Marriage is created by God and is not simply a social contract or convenience.

Flowing from the gift of marriage is another precious gift of God, the gift of children. "Be fruitful and multiply" (Genesis 1:28) is as much a word of divine blessing as it is a command. Children are the most obvious, distinctive, and natural gift of marriage, for the child is in every sense the "one flesh" of the mother and father. Marriage lived out according to God's purpose is therefore also, just as naturally, the optimal setting for the child. Within the gift of marriage children receive the blessing of a father and mother who nurture and care for them, modeling a life in which the distinctive uniqueness and created differences of male and female serve to complement one another.

Part of the tragedy of contemporary cultural perspectives in Europe and North America is a growing bifurcation of marriage and child-bearing. Growing numbers of men avoid or abdicate fatherly responsibility. Growing numbers of women choose to have and/or raise children apart from marriage. Just as frequently encountered is the pervasive assumption of married couples that postponing or purposefully rejecting children is compatible with the marriage bond. In these different ways, children appear to have value only to the extent they fulfill parental desires.

While the gift of procreation is a profound and beautiful testimony of the blessedness of marriage

and reveals one of marriage's most fundamental purposes, marital goodness is not limited by procreation. Where procreation is not possible, many couples choose to adopt a child into their family and, regardless of intention, also reflect the divine love which leads God to adopt us as His own (Romans 8:15; Galatians 4:5).

So also, a childless couple exhibits, richly and beautifully, the blessings and goodness of man and woman living in complementarity. Although as an individual male and an individual female they are different, even to the point of often seeming to be alien to the other, their sexual and emotional bond enacts a life of self-giving openness to each other, protected by the bond of faithfulness. The committed love of marriage always reveals God's intention that individuals are called into community, since marriage takes us beyond our individual identities so that we give ourselves to another who is distinctively different from us.

The beauty and significance of marriage go beyond its earthly effects — as rich and wonderful as they are. God gave marriage as a picture of the relationship between Christ and His bride, the Church. In sustained and exalted language, Ephesians 5:21-33 connects godly marriage with the glorious relationship of Christ and His Church. As a man and woman relate to one another with rich love and profound respect, their one flesh union hints of and is intended to signify the union of Christ and His bride, the Church. But Christ and His bride also indicate the fullness of divine intention for marriage. Speaking of Christ as Bridegroom and Church as bride, the apostle notes that husbands are called to sacrificial love toward their wives and wives to a willing respect for their husbands.

In responding to the bitter reality of divorce, the Word made flesh, our Lord Jesus, reaffirms the gift of marriage and then reminds us of an obvious implication: "Therefore what God has joined together, let no one separate" (see Matthew 19:3b-6). His warning is necessary because the beautiful gift

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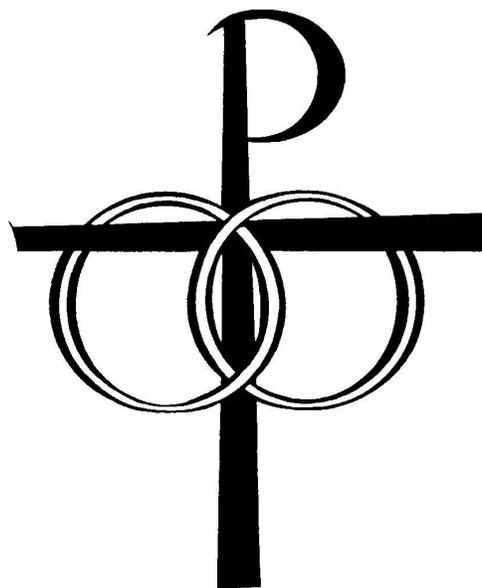
of marriage — like all of God's created goodness — can be and is marred by sin, which Jesus describes as "hardness of heart" (Matthew 19:8). Yet, sin does not have ultimate power. Christians recognize that marriage is lived under the cross. Husbands and wives are not exempt from the suffering that comes with faithfulness in marriage. Rather, trusting in the promises of Christ Jesus and clinging to each other in love, marriage is the arena for husband and wife to live together in repentance and faith.

God's intention for marriage is also skewed when it is spurned as unimportant for human well-being, or repudiated as a godly gift, or twisted into forms that no longer correspond to the gift God has intended. Rather, God gives marriage to humanity for its well-being. He commends Biblical marriage for couples to make a deep commitment to one another before God for a lifetime of giving to each other.

In faithfulness to Christ and in recognition of God's desire to continue to bless men and women in the gift of holy marriage, the Church through the ages has sought to encourage godly, joyful, faithful preparation for marriage according to God's plan and work. This is in obedience to the Scriptures, which call men and women to an appropriate discipline of desire. Our human inclination is one of self-satisfaction, but God's Word calls us to a higher purpose — serving God and others (see Romans 6:12-14; 1 John 4:20). To serve the other requires the discipline of our bodies, which obviously includes sexual desires (see Romans 13:13). Therefore both Biblical and wider human traditions of most cultures have emphasized the importance of chaste relationships which reserve sexual intimacy for marriage.

In such ways Scripture holds forth a vision of human life as male and female — one which invites us to see that as embodied creatures, our Creator intends great joy for us. Joyful, fulfilled life as men and women requires a paradox, however, for it demands the discipline of our bodies so that our desires do not rule us. This is so because the source of deepest human joy comes as our lives reflect their highest purpose in serving God and our neighbor (Matthew 22:38-39).

May 2013



Approved by:

The Reverend John F. Bradosky, Bishop
The North American Lutheran Church

The Reverend Robert Bugbee, President
Lutheran Church–Canada

The Most Reverend Robert Duncan, Archbishop
The Anglican Church in North America

The Reverend Dr. Matthew C. Harrison, President
The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod

**Official participants in the
ACNA-LCMS-LCC-NALC "Marriage Summit"
(May 3-5, 2013, Dallas, Texas)**

The Anglican Church in North America
The Very Reverend Dr. Jonathan S. Riches
The Rt. Reverend Dr. Ray R. Sutton

The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod
The Reverend Dr. Frederic W. Baue
The Reverend Dr. Joel D. Lehenbauer
The Reverend John T. Pless
The Reverend Larry M. Vogel

Lutheran Church–Canada
The Reverend Dr. John R. Stephenson

The North American Lutheran Church
The Reverend Mark C. Chavez
The Reverend Dr. David Wendel

Charles and Anita Jackson are NALC missionaries in Mongolia

NALC missionaries Pastor Charles and Anita Jackson are serving with World Mission Prayer League Canada.

Charles grew up in Alberta and received his Master of Divinity Degree from the Lutheran Theological Seminary in Saskatoon in 1993. He also holds an undergraduate degree in Missiology.

Charles served as the pastor of Sharon and Bethany Lutheran congregations of the Donalda parish in Alberta 1995-2000. Charles has also served as the Chair of the Home Council of the World Mission Prayer League (WMPL) Canada.

A native of Minnesota, Anita received her Master of Theological Studies Degree from Concordia Lutheran Seminary in Edmonton in 1999. She holds an undergraduate degree in Elementary Education.

Anita served with WMPL in Ecuador 1989-1993, teaching at the Inter-American Bilingual School in Cuenca.

The Jacksons served in Kenya with WMPL Canada 2001-2008, working with the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Kenya (ELCK). Charles was a pastor and church leadership developer for the Samburu church, and Anita taught English and adult literacy classes.

After handing the work over to the ELCK Samburu pastors, the Jacksons undertook a new assignment in 2010 with WMPL's partner agency in Mongolia, Joint Christian Services (JCS) International (www.jcsintl.org).

"JCS International, a consortium of Christian organizations, shares the Good News of Jesus Christ with the people of Mongolia by working with them to achieve their full, God-given potential through development, relief, and encouraging the planting, growth, development and unity of indigenous churches," its website explains.



Charles and Anita Jackson

Their vision is "to see Mongolians building and restoring families, churches, and communities."

Having completed formal Mongolian language and cultural studies, the Jacksons have taken up their full-time assignments with JCS. Charles serves as the Director of Projects and Placements, while Anita helps English students improve their language skills and encourages them as their mentor.

To find out how you can support our missionaries in Mongolia or learn more about WMPL visit www.wmpl.org or wmpcanada.org. contact: Those interested in contacting the Jacksons may e-mail them at sonrose@outlook.com.

Donations to the Jacksons or the projects they serve can be made to World Mission Prayer League (Canada or USA). Be sure to note "Jackson support" or the name of the project you want to support in the memo of your gift.

Gifts may be sent to:

World Mission Prayer League
232 Clifton Ave. 5408 49th Ave.
Minneapolis, MN 55403 Camrose, AB T4V 0N7

‘Where Authority and Obedience Meet ... Miraculous Faith Unfolds’

A Reflection on Luke 7:1-10 and The Great Commission

Current events remind us how easy it is to claim power and authority for ourselves and engage not only in *selfishness* but *self-deceptiveness*. How easy it is to move from *selfishness* to *self-righteousness*. Soon we reach the point of being so *self-absorbed* that attending to others or to Jesus is the farthest thing from our hearts and minds. This is the result of trying to grab power and authority for ourselves. It is the direction of our culture and contrary to the Kingdom of Heaven Jesus proclaimed. We are in such desperate need yet we resist the remedy of the Word, Jesus’ direction and the true meaning of discipleship.

During these past decades some church bodies have tried to remove any vestige of the military from the scriptures, hymns and liturgies. They have altered the psalms to advance this agenda, and we all now know it is politically incorrect to sing “Onward Christian Soldiers.” There are many who understand Christianity to be a matter of passivity, acceptance, and universal inclusivism. Yet this text forces us to deal with a key element of military life that Jesus lifts up as an example for all to follow. It is a key component of discipleship!

Several years ago our son Jacob was commissioned as an officer in the Air Force after his graduation from college. One by one those being commissioned raised their hand and articulated their promise to preserve, protect and defend this nation and the constitution from all enemies, foreign and domestic, even to giving their life.

This event gave me a chance to reflect on our commission — to implement the Great Commission. Shouldn’t we see ourselves as those commissioned with the responsibility to commission others for this service? Isn’t what we are up to as followers of Jesus at least as important as the mission of the Air Force?

The first part of the Great Commission is often overlooked. It begins with these words of Jesus,



From the Bishop

Bishop John Bradosky

“All authority in heaven and earth has been given to me.” Everything else that follows in the Great Commission depends on our belief in this truth. Our going, making disciples, baptizing, teaching, and the consolation of His presence are all dependent on this one important truth: Jesus has all authority.

Perhaps you can already see the problem. In our culture we are caught up in political power and the authority of people who simply claim it for themselves. Dallas Willard writes, “The deeper issue here is the authority of the knowledge institutions of our time and what shall and shall not be taught under the flag of their authority. Many atheists and agnostic critics of Christianity lay claim to that authority and believe their higher degrees license them to talk grandly about things they have never studied: theology, Jesus, or the Christian spiritual life.”

Does it change things if you really believe that Jesus is not just a lovable cynic, as some have described Him, but the smartest man who ever lived? If He has all authority, wouldn’t you assume that His wisdom is more accurate and profound than any other teacher? Every system of every person and thing that ever existed He knows because He put it together and established it.

Paul reminds us that all things hold together in Him. His power was demonstrated by His miracles and the greatest miracle of all — His Resurrection. He is God in flesh made manifest. As God, He is Lord of all and as such He indeed has all authority.

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It is easy for Christians to blame the world for the difficulties we face in the Church, but the most fundamental problems are within. This text forces us to ask what place Jesus has in our lives. Do we acknowledge Him as the one with all authority? Do we see Him as with authority over our family, career, sexuality, finances, morality, politics, values, priorities, thoughts, actions and words? This is where discipleship begins — setting aside our private claims to authority and accepting His absolute power and authority.

This does not come easily. People often struggle against order and structure, especially when someone will be exercising authority over them. We don't mind structure in general but resist obedience to another who has authority over us. Christians often respond in similar ways. Some Christians say they want to be responsible and accountable to Christ alone, but not to any other person. If we haven't learned the discipline of being obedient to a person who has responsibility for our spiritual wellbeing, it may not be a reasonable assumption that we will be attentive to the voice of Christ either.

The necessity for learning this discipline is explicit in the commandments. We are instructed to honor our father and mother. They have been given the task of providing for our spiritual growth and physical and emotional well-being. Their authority in our life comes from God, and they are accountable to God. God has given them oversight in our life 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.

If we cannot accept the authority and oversight that Christ has given to another on our behalf, then we are bound to have great difficulty accepting the authority and oversight of Christ Himself, as He is the source for both. Our struggle is that we want to be responsible to no one but ourselves. We often

start with the assumption that Christ must agree with our needs and desires so whatever choice we make must come from Christ's authority within us and therefore be blessed by Christ. This is precisely how so many heresies that plagued the Church in the past were conceived and continue to be manifest throughout the Church today.

Trusting the authority and leadership of others is difficult because we have all experienced so many bad leaders that we begin to wonder if good leaders exist. Many have authority that is not God-given while others 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.

The text from Luke is a fascinating story of a Roman centurion who is pleading for the life of his servant. The centurion understands the proper use of authority, the chain of command. He is a man under authority. He has someone over him, and he is accountable to that person. 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 does not count himself 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.

Perhaps we are not unlike Israel. We want to wrestle God's authority away from Him. We want to argue with God asserting ourselves, our wisdom, our thoughts, our ways, our morality, our church, our needs, and our desires.

In his book, *The Cost of Discipleship*, Dietrich Bonhoeffer makes explicit what Jesus is pointing to in this text: "Only he who believes is obedient and

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only he who is obedient believes.” Faith and obedience are inseparable, intimately connected.

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 us, being responsible to others and demanding responsible behavior from others. The Apostle Paul reminds us, by 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 relational 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. Jesus exercised authority over His disciples, teaching 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.

Dietrich Bonhoeffer writes, “The only proper response to the word which Jesus brings with Him from eternity is to do it!” Jesus repeatedly emphasizes doing what He says and not just listening to His words or endlessly discussing them. Remember, Jesus concludes His Sermon on the Mount with the contrasting images of the man who builds his house on the sand and the man who builds his house on the rock. One is destroyed while the other stands firm. There is only one thing that separates them. One knows the teaching but refuses to do it. The other knows Jesus’ teaching and obeys it. This is the way we acknowledge His authority in our lives. If Jesus is the one with all authority, what is to be gained by remaining disobedient? Being a disciple, a follower of Jesus, involves us in that confession and obedient response.

Luther’s words are helpful: “For a Christian life consists entirely in the following: First, that we believe and trust in Christ our Savior, being fully assured that we are not deserted by Him, whatever need or danger may betide us. Secondly, that every Christian person also conducts himself toward friend or foe in the same way, as he sees Christ does, who is so willing to help everyone. Whoever does this, is a Christian; but he who does it not, is no Christian, though he calls himself one. For these two cannot be separated; faith must be followed by its fruits, or it is not true faith.”

When the friends of the centurion connected him to Jesus, they expected Jesus to act. An African partner in Tanzania said that one of the biggest differences that now exists between Christianity in the United States and in Africa is that they believe that Jesus is God. His authority gives Him the ability to act miraculously in any circumstance. They sincerely believe that all authority is in Jesus. If we really believe that Jesus has all authority in heaven and on earth, should we expect anything less?

Where authority and obedience meet we should expect nothing less than His miraculous power to be manifest. May it be so among us.

St. Luke's College in South Sudan opens

It began with a vision — the dream of one of the “Lost Boys” from South Sudan. On April 15, NALC Pastor Matthew Riak’s dream became a reality when the Minister of Education cut the “rope” and officially opened St. Luke’s Theological College in South Sudan.



Ceremonial opening of St. Luke's Theological College in South Sudan.

Bishop Nathaniel Garang Anyith, retired Episcopal bishop of Diocese of Bor, and Bishop Peter Bol, the bishop of the Anglican Church of South Sudan, attended the opening ceremony along with 95 students and guests, six administrators and five lecturers.

April 15 was also the first day of class for the 48 students who are enrolled and admitted. The programs with the most students enrolled are leadership and development, intermediate English, and theology.

St. Luke's Theological College exists for the purpose of training and equipping men and women to be core leaders within their local churches and communities. The college has been licensed to offer certificate and diploma courses in Leadership and Development, Management, Theology, Business Administration, Accounting, and Economics. Intermediate and advanced English courses are also offered.



Temporary location of St. Luke's Theological College.

The college is currently in a rented facility in Bor. The compound includes two classrooms, office space, and living quarters for staff. Students do not live on campus. This is temporary while their campus is being built.

In 2010, the Governor of Jonglei State donated a prime piece of property in Bor to Sudan Lutheran Community Development, a non-profit organization working in southern Sudan. The organization has transferred this land to St. Luke's Theological College, and it will eventually become the college's campus.

The government has continued its support this year with a donation of 100 desks and 100 chairs. While the College bore the cost of assembling this furniture, the gift represents a donation worth \$8,000.00.

To find out more about NALC Missionary Pastor Matthew Riak and St. Luke's Theological College go to www.stlhc.org or contact the NALC missions office 614-777-5709 or missions@thenalc.org.

This article was taken from Wel Tiath: The “Good News” Letter. For a copy of the newsletter contact St. Luke's Association Director for Development, Rev. Frank Rothfuss at fronthfuss@comcast.com or 616-481-2433.

NALC website to highlight congregational activities

The website of the North American Lutheran Church has recently undergone several changes. The updates are designed to make it easier for NALC members and congregations to find information and to report activities.

A new section of the NALC website will highlight news and activities from member congregations. NALC congregations are encouraged to submit articles and photos for this section of the website.

“Our hope is that congregations will send regular articles about mission trips, special activities, and other items of interest,” said Kathy Jacobson, who will be overseeing the website in the NALC office.

“I would love to be inundated with short articles and photos from our congregations so we can highlight a different congregation’s Great Commission outreach and discipleship efforts each week. Submitting articles regularly will help the NALC live out its mission-driven core value to share the Good News with the world,” she said.

“We are also hoping for articles that could be reprinted in the *NALC News*,” said Pastor David Baer, *NALC News* editor.

Please e-mail articles about your congregation to webmaster@thenalc.org.

The website also includes an updated feature for finding NALC congregations.

The previous NALC website was designed by Terry Rowley, a member of Holy Trinity Lutheran Church in Abington, Pa. He brought considerable knowledge and expertise in internet website design and operation to the task and donated many hours to the creation and operation of the NALC website. Rowley works for Amtrak in their technology and internet operations. He also oversees the internet site for his church.

“The NALC is deeply indebted to Terry. He volunteered many, many hours in developing and maintaining an excellent website. His knowledge and experience have been invaluable in guiding our overall communications strategy,” said Pastor Mark Chavez, NALC General Secretary.

The new website is the result of the work of a task force consisting of volunteers and NALC staff. Members were Anne Gleason and Kathy Jacobson of the NALC Administrative Office, Pastor Mark Chavez, NALC General Secretary; Ryan Schwarz, NALC Treasurer; Pastor David Baer, *NALC News* editor; Donna Evans of Pittsburgh, Pa.; David Hahn of Lincoln, Neb.; and Carol Lattier of Tyler, Texas.

An important component of the website change was to make it easier for NALC staff members to directly update the website.

NALC annual reports from congregations

Congregations recently received an e-mail requesting that they complete their annual report for the North American Lutheran Church.

“As the NALC grows, it is important to have a record of essential information about each of our congregations and the church as a whole. The information helps us identify our strengths and weaknesses and keeps us accountable to being a mission-driven church,” said Pastor Mark Chavez, NALC General Secretary.

Each congregation received a unique link to its online report. If you did not receive the link to your report or if you have any questions, please contact Anne Gleason at agleason@thenalc.org or 888-551-7254.

Black Forest Lutheran Church

Colorado Springs, Colorado

By Pastor Dennis Nelson

Black Forest Lutheran Church is located on the north side of Colorado Springs and is a charter member of the North American Lutheran Church. Pastor Ken Hohag has served and led the congregation since 1990 and said that it was their sense of mission that first drew him there. Of the various missions and ministries that the congregation supports, many are relationships of 20 years or more. A few of those relationships are newer. The congregation has mission connections that are both local and global.

Locally, the congregation houses a food pantry that serves people in their Zip Code, which covers an area of more than 100 square miles. They also participate in an interfaith hospitality network, which houses the homeless, and they support Food for the Poor, an international organization that provides food, housing, and other necessities for people living in some of the world's poorest countries.

According to Pastor Hohag, the congregation's biggest growing edge is the way in which they have been working to build more hands-on, face-to-face connections with the people and organizations with which they are in partnership.

One of these people is Pastor Diedone (Didi) Panzo, a NALC pastor who is originally from Angola, Africa, but now serves in Ecuador as a missionary with the World Mission Prayer League. When Pastor Hohag met Didi at a Lutheran conference a few years ago, he realized that he did not know even one missionary by name. He knew that needed to change.

Pastor Panzo was a medical missionary and pastor in Angola, in charge of a very large health ministry for the Angola Council of Churches. Because of the civil war there — and because he refused to cooperate with the corrupt government — his life was in danger, and he and his family fled to the United States.



These Ecuadoran children are among the many people Pastor Didi Panzo's ministry at Paz y Esperanza (Peace and Hope) seeks to reach with the Gospel by partnering with Black Forest Lutheran Church, World Mission Prayer League, and others.

At first Black Forest Lutheran Church sent only financial support to Pastor Panzo, but did not have a real relationship with him. Again, Pastor Hohag knew that needed to change. So the congregation began by learning about and responding to specific needs that Didi and his family have.

Last year they found out that he needed a car; they raised funds so that he could buy a used one. This year they are responding to the financial need of the cost of his daughter's schooling. The congregation has committed itself to providing half of the funds, and is working with the World Mission Prayer League to contact potential supporters to raise the other half.

The congregation's website contains a link to Pastor Panzo's blog, so visitors can learn what is happening directly. A member of the congregation is in regular e-mail communication with Pastor

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Panzo, to learn of his latest joys and challenges, prayer needs, and practical needs, which this member then shares with the entire congregation.

Another personal connection just beginning is an effort to match up the Sunday School children with Didi's elementary-school-aged daughter, Sarah. Already, one of the Sunday School girls is in regular e-mail communication with her.

Pastor Panzo was able to visit and meet the congregation in November of 2011, and he is coming back to Colorado Springs this spring to preach and lead a Sunday morning class, so that the people will hear more from him first hand.

A major aspect of Pastor Panza's work is called *Paz y Esperanza* (Peace and Hope), which provides assistance for victims of family violence and human trafficking and also includes an outreach to prisoners. Didi's wife, Serafina, assists him in that ministry.

One of Didi's most interesting experiences happened on a day when he was walking to his office in Guayaquil, Ecuador. Being African, he was approached by another African, who asked him if he was from Nigeria. First thinking that the woman meant the country of Nigeria, he later learned that Nigeria is also the name of a nearby community of descendants of black slaves brought to South America in the mid-1800s. He agreed to go and speak to them. When Didi told some of his friends about the invitation, they warned him about the dangers. But he responded, "When the Lord calls you, you must go." He went, was received very warmly, and has started a Bible study there.

During the 2012 Lenten season, Pastor Hohag decided to do a sermon series on the congregation's various ministry partners. Each Sunday he used the sermon time to introduce one of the partners and then wove their story into the message. One Sunday the sermon was about Pastor Panzo and his work in Ecuador. Another Sunday the sermon was about Pastor Eddy Perez and Iglesia Evangelica Luterana San Pedro, a NALC congregation in Miami, Fla. Pastor Perez serves on the Lutheran CORE Steering Committee.



Pastor Didi Panzo and his wife, Serafina, at a ceremony announcing Paz y Esperanza's campaign for the prevention of child sexual abuse. Serafina received a certificate for her work.

The congregation also has partnerships with an Ethiopian Oromo congregation in Denver and with Cristo Rey (Christ the King) Lutheran Church in El Paso, Texas. Pastor Hohag had mentored Gudeta Burka, the Oromo pastor in Denver who was ordained in December. Black Forest Lutheran Church has been partners with Cristo Rey congregation for 22 years.

Every summer they send a group to El Paso to do various kinds of work. They hope to have a youth mission trip to Iglesia Luterana San Pedro in Miami next summer.

Speaking of these partnerships, Pastor Hohag said, "I love to connect people of this congregation with people in other countries who have so much to offer us. They have a marvelous witness to Jesus Christ, a strong sense of evangelism, a deep respect for the authority of Scripture, a vibrant life of prayer, and a deep trust in the Lord. We have been blessed over and over again by these partners praying for us and our praying for them."

You can learn more about the ministries and mission connections of Black Forest Lutheran Church, including a link to Didi Panzo's blog and pictures from the congregation's annual work party trip to the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation, by going to their website, www.bflchurch.org.

Reprinted from CORE Connection, the newsletter of Lutheran CORE. These articles are part of a series highlighting mission connections.

Mentoring in Ministry

I've recently had cause to reflect on the importance of mentoring. Not because of anything I've done, but instead because of a remarkable example of a man who stepped forward to personally mentor my oldest son, Jason.

Jason's mentor was a man named Mike McLaran. I speak in the past tense because Mike died unexpectedly, while on his regular five-mile jog, the day before this last Easter. He had just celebrated his 53rd birthday.

Mike was what you'd call a "mover and shaker" in the Salem, Ore., community, widely known and respected. He was a very committed Christian. Over 1,000 people attended the memorial service held at the local Christian Missionary Alliance church he attended.

Back to my son, Jason. Mike, who was the Chief Executive Officer for the Chamber of Commerce, was instrumental in hiring Jason a couple of months after my son's graduation from Pacific Lutheran University in 2004. Then, for the next seven years, he mentored Jason as his employer and friend — training him to eventually take over his position as CEO. This transition, initiated by Mike as he moved on to other professional pursuits, took place in 2010. Then, since that year, Mike continued to meet with Jason twice a month to offer his personal and professional support.

So on that Saturday of this last Easter weekend Jason called me unexpectedly. He had just received word of Mike's sudden death and asked if I would accompany him to Mike's house where a few friends had gathered to be with Mike's wife, Diane. While there at the house I noticed Jason and two other young men were spending most of their time on the backyard patio — taking the responsibility of making calls on their cell phones to inform dozens of people about Mike's sudden, unexpected death.

It was in that moment when it hit me — Mike had been a mentor to all three of these young men, including Jason.



In Pursuit of the Great Commission

Pastor Don Brandt

(Jason, by the way, is the father of my two-year-old granddaughter, Mya, who recently completed seven months of chemotherapy.)

That afternoon, one of those young men on the patio shared with me how much Mike meant to him. He recalled that at a recent leadership conference the speaker had instructed the participants — before they went to bed that night — to call someone in their lives to whom they owed a debt of gratitude. Mike, whom he had once worked for, had been the recipient of his phone call.

In the next couple of weeks I learned that Mike's role as mentor was by no means limited to the three young men on that patio.

When it comes to my son I can only feel a tremendous sense of gratitude for all Mike did for him and meant to him. The morning after Mike's death, at my congregation's Sunday services, I opened my Easter message with an acknowledgment of Mike's life and faith, and also shared briefly how much Mike had meant to my son.

I share this story with you for a couple of reasons: One is my personal confession regarding my failure to seek out opportunities, in ministry, to mentor others in their lives of faith. This confession is not about any shortcomings I might have as a father to Jason. Mike filled a very specific and important role in Jason's life that was, in many ways, distinct from that of a parent. But Mike's life and legacy reminded me of the squandered opportunities when I could have stepped forward to mentor others in their walk with Christ.

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Be Bold and Unafraid - Part 2

As stated in last month's "Ministry Matters" article, I will again this month be addressing those reading this newsletter who are not yet in the North American Lutheran Church. I am writing in particular to those still in another Lutheran church-body but who earnestly desire, yearn, and pray for a way to affiliate with the NALC. For those of you "in the choir" (the NALC), I promise I'll be "preaching" to you in next month's "Ministry Matters." But for now, let me say a few words, again, to those pastors and congregations who feel — okay, I'll say it — trapped in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America or the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada!

After last month's article, I was surprised by the response I received from such pastors and congregations. Obviously, these are folks who are hurting and struggling in the ELCA/ELCIC, knowing that the pastor and a large majority of members wish to leave their current denomination and affiliate with the NALC, but know a vote to do so might leave them broken and divided.

The truth is no one in the NALC wishes to see any congregation split asunder. Often this leaves two declining congregations.

One congregation I've been visiting with recently has faced this possibility. After a failed "first vote" that was just one vote short of disaffiliating with the ELCA, many members considered leaving and establishing a new NALC congregation in this relatively small town. Rather than do so, the church council voted to move forward with a vote to "dual affiliate" with the NALC, while remaining a congregation of the ELCA. This seemed to the congregational leaders the only way forward as a united congregation.

While not ideal — not clean and tidy, not the way most folks wanted it — this dealt positively with the reality of their situation. They voted to dual-affiliate, and the vote passed by a 4-to-1 margin — a far wider margin than the vote to leave the ELCA. It was an indication that, in spite of the division, they would try to remain together in the one congregation.



Ministry Matters

Pastor David Wendel

Assistant to the Bishop
for Ministry and Ecumenism

Sadly, the ELCA synodical bishop wrote a letter to the pastor and congregation stating that dual affiliation is not allowed in the ELCA. He cited ELCA constitution chapter 9 as proof that this is not acceptable, though nothing in that chapter refers to dual affiliation. Indeed, there is nothing in the ELCA churchwide, synod or congregational constitutions which prohibits or even addresses dual affiliation. Where did this claim surface, if not in the ELCA constitution?

ELCA Secretary David D. Swartling provided an opinion in a memo dated Jan. 19, 2010. In the memo to ELCA synod bishops and vice presidents, Swartling said, "Dual Rostering' of ordained ministers and congregations is impermissible under the Constitutions, Bylaws, and Continuing Resolutions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America."

In fact, back in April 2000, then-ELCA Presiding Bishop H. George Anderson was quoted as saying that dual-affiliated congregations "don't pose a problem for the ELCA." And yet Secretary Swartling, like Secretary Lloyd Almen before him, states that dual affiliation is not permitted for ELCA congregations — a position they have clearly invented. And yet, under the ELCA's constitution, the exclusive power to interpret the constitution is given to the Secretary. (By contrast, in the NALC, the Court of Adjudication, elected by delegates to the NALC annual Convocation, is responsible for interpreting our constitution.)

None of this has anything to do with a congregation's own constitution, of course. The congregation council typically has the responsibility of interpreting

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Be Bold and Unafraid

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its constitution — so it can decide whether the congregation may pursue dual affiliation. So far, we have never seen an ELCA congregation's constitution which even mentioned dual affiliation. Voting to dual affiliate might run afoul of stated ELCA churchwide policy, in which case the ELCA could take disciplinary action against the congregation. However under the ELCA constitution, potential disciplinary actions are limited to three: censure of the congregation, suspension from ELCA membership for a period of time, or permanent removal from the ELCA. In any event, in most cases and in most ELCA synods, dually-affiliated congregations have to date generally been tolerated.

With regard to the decision of local congregations to dual affiliate, NALC Bishop John Bradosky refers to the ELCA Constitution, 5.01.c, which states, "The congregations, synods, and churchwide organization of this church are interdependent partners sharing responsibly in God's mission. In an interdependent relationship primary responsibility for particular functions will vary between the partners. Whenever possible, the entity most directly affected by a decision shall be the principal party responsible for decision and implementation, with the other entities facilitating and assisting. Each congregation, synod, and separately incorporated ministry, as well as the churchwide organization itself, is a separate legal entity and is responsible for exercising its powers and authorities." In this instance, dual-affiliation most directly affects the local congregation, so, shouldn't the decision-making authority reside in the local congregation?

The main point is — for the sake of unity in many congregational situations — dual affiliation may be the best way forward for that congregation. When there is wide-spread support of pastor and congregation for NALC affiliation, but not a two-thirds majority, dual affiliation is a faithful way to keep the congregation together. In fact, dual affiliation can be pursued without holding a vote to leave the ELCA. This keeps the congregation from needing to follow the burdensome ELCA process for disaffiliation. And if dual affiliation truly is best for the congregation in terms of its unity and its local

mission in service to Christ, isn't that really what should matter most?

In closing, a few thoughts about dual affiliation:

- + It may not be ideal, but it can be workable.
- + It may be "messy," but what isn't?
- + It may require backbone and boldness.
- + It may keep more people within the congregation than a failed vote to disaffiliate.
- + It should allow the congregation to keep focused on mission and discipleship, rather than politics, agendas, constitutional procedures, and votes.
- + It only requires a simple majority to affiliate with the NALC.
- + Affiliation will "shake-out" over time, as the congregation gravitates to one or the other.
- + It allows a faithful pastor and congregation to participate fully in the NALC.

Mentoring in Ministry

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Second, I share this story in the hope that each of you — whether pastors or lay leaders — will consider whether there are currently people in your life that need a mentor. Perhaps there is someone God has already placed in your path — someone you have failed to reach out to because you're simply too busy pursuing less important tasks.

As people of faith, we sometimes speak of the importance of our legacy. Often we strive for legacies that involve public achievements and recognition. Perhaps God has called you — and me — to a legacy that is far more personal, but equally important: the legacy of lives transformed because we took the time to mentor and witness to someone needing our guidance and love.

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