

# NALC News

North American Lutheran Church

October 2013

## Bishop Spring to lead beginnings of North American Lutheran Seminary

Bishop Paull Spring will direct the beginnings of the North American Lutheran Seminary.

The NALC Executive Council approved the appointment of Bishop Spring to serve as interim coordinator for theological education. His responsibilities will include developing administrative and organizational plans for the new seminary design. He will serve until a Seminary Director is called and then will assist in the transition process.

Bishop Spring was the first bishop of the NALC. He was also a leader of Lutheran CORE and previously served as bishop of the Northwestern Pennsylvania Synod of the ELCA.

The 2013 NALC Convocation approved establishing a seminary to provide for the theological education of future pastors for the North American Lutheran Church. It also authorized raising \$1 million for startup costs.

There will be two components of the NALC Seminary: a Seminary Center at Trinity School for Ministry in Ambridge, Pa., (near Pittsburgh) and Houses of Studies located within NALC Mission Districts.



*Bishop Paull Spring*

A House of Studies is already in place and functioning at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary in Charlotte, N.C. The director is the Rev. Dr. Mary Havens. A similar plan is being developed at Trinity School for Ministry which will also serve as a connecting and cooperative point for the whole seminary design.

“This seminary design is an exciting prospect for our church,” Bishop Spring said. “For the renewal and mission outreach of

the church, qualified and orthodox pastors are an essential element.”

A search committee is presently seeking a leader for the NALS. The Seminary Director will serve both as administrator of the North American Lutheran Seminary and the Seminary Center. The hope is to have the Seminary Director in place by January.

In addition to Bishop Spring, other search committee members are: Dr. Robert Benne, professor emeritus of religion and philosophy at Roanoke College, and the Rev. Dr. Ben Johnson, former professor and dean at Hama Divinity School, Wittenberg University; and former president of the Lutheran Bible Institute in California.

Prof. Benne and Prof. Johnson both served on the NALC’s 10-member Task Force for Theological Education which developed the plan for the NALC seminary.

The Convocation authorized raising \$1 million for the establishment of the seminary. Funding for the seminary will come from support from NALC congregations and from individual gifts. A fund-raising emphasis in congregations will begin soon.

# Fund-raising effort begins to raise \$1 million for new NALC seminary

The North American Lutheran Church has begun an effort to raise at least \$1 million for the new North American Lutheran Seminary.

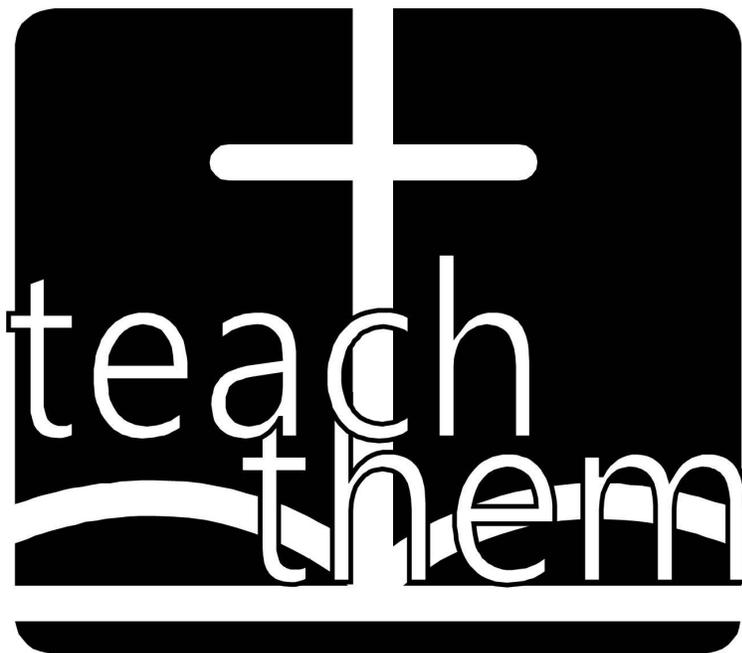
NALC congregations are encouraged to have a special Seminary Month emphasis as a part of the fund-raising efforts. The decision about when to hold the four-week emphasis will be made by local congregations, but organizers hope to raise funds as quickly as possible.

The 2013 NALC Convocation approved establishing a seminary to provide for the theological education of future pastors for the North American Lutheran Church. The Convocation also approved raising \$1 million to start the seminary.

There will be two components of the NALC Seminary: a Seminary Center at Trinity School for Ministry in Ambridge, Pa., and Houses of Studies located within NALC Mission Districts.

“The unique thing about this seminary plan is that rather than investing in bricks and mortar, we can make an investment in people. We’ll be making an investment in faithful, distinguished faculty. We’ll be making an investment in our students — who will receive faithful teaching, the chance to grow and mature and fully develop their leadership capacity. And we’ll be making an investment in our congregations to provide pastors and leaders who will faithfully proclaim the confessional Lutheran witness to the Gospel of Jesus Christ for the sake of future generations,” said NALC Bishop John Bradosky.

“By supporting the Theological Education Fund, congregations are also making an investment in their own future by being assured that their future pastors will not only excel in all the duties of the pastoral office but also love Christ, believe what the Scriptures proclaim, and appreciate the value of our confessional heritage,” Bishop Bradosky said. “It is my prayer that you will join me in supporting this most important endeavor.”



*“...teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you...” Mt 28:20a*

Congregations were sent material and bulletin inserts for the Seminary Month emphasis by e-mail. The resources are also available on the NALC website. You may request copies of the resources by calling the NALC office at 888-551-7254.

“There is truly great strength in numbers, and there is great potential in the NALC to quickly build up the Theological Education Fund in support of the new North American Lutheran Seminary,” said Pastor David Wendel, Assistant to the Bishop for Ministry and Ecumenism. “Already, we have had folks outside the NALC contacting us about how they can donate to support the NALS. Now is the time for those of us in the NALC to step up as well!”

Donations to support the NALC Theological Education Fund may be given through local congregations, online at [www.thenalc.org](http://www.thenalc.org), or sent to:

NALC Theological Education Fund  
2299 Palmer Drive, Suite 220  
New Brighton, MN 55112-2202

# ‘Discipleship - It Takes One to Make One’ is theme of the NALC Mission Festival

“Discipleship — It Takes One to Make One” is the theme of the 2013 Mission Festival Nov. 7-9 at Upper Arlington Lutheran Church in Hilliard, Ohio.

The goal of the conference, which is sponsored by both the North American Lutheran Church and Lutheran CORE, is to inspire and train attendees to make disciples. This will be accomplished with worship, passionate speakers, experienced workshop presenters, and time for mutual support.

Featured speakers include NALC Bishop John Bradosky and Pastor Charles Lindquist of the World Mission Prayer League. They will be speaking about the early Church using Acts 2:42-47 as a basis for discussion of how to apply the Church’s experiences in creating a culture of discipleship today.

The festival will provide time for worship, prayer, inspiration, and mutual encouragement. There will be workshops and break-out sessions. Small groups will be available for mission planters, international missions, and renewing congregations.

Daily worship will focus on Acts 1:8 and will be led by NALC mission teams, Lutheran CORE, and the Great Commission Society team.

Workshop presenters will share practical tools for transforming lives by following Christ and walking with others in their discipleship. Some of the presenters include:

- + Lutheran CORE - Pastor Steve Shipman.
- + The Navigators - Bill Mowery.
- + Renewing Congregations by Planting Churches - Pastor Brad Hales.
- + Prayer - Pastor Charles Lindquist.
- + House Churches - Pastor Gemechis Buba.

Throughout the conference, attendees will meet in breakout groups based on their ministry focus:

mission planters and mission congregations, international missionaries and supporters, and established congregations focused on renewal. In these sessions individuals will discuss the plenary sessions in depth and begin to apply what they heard. It is also a time to share highs and lows in ministry and learn from the group’s experience, as well as a time for mutual encouragement and group learning.

The conference will also include time to meet and greet missionaries and mission groups from around the globe.

Registration for the Mission Festival is \$100 and includes lunch on Friday. See the NALC website — [www.thenalc.org](http://www.thenalc.org) — for more details or contact the NALC office at [nalc.mnoffice@thenalc.org](mailto:nalc.mnoffice@thenalc.org) or 888-551-7254.

## Lutheran Missions Festival in California

Lutheran Missions Festival 2013, sponsored by the Central Pacific and Southwest Pacific Mission Districts of the NALC, will take place on Saturday, Oct. 26, at St. John’s Lutheran Church in Arroyo Grande, Calif.

Keynote speaker is the Rev. Dr. Gemechis Buba, Assistant to the Bishop for Missions. There will be two addresses by Dr. Buba, followed by a time for questions.

There will be presentations on local missions as well as time for small-group discussion. A mass choir will be directed by Dr. Michael Shasberger of Westmont College in Santa Barbara.

This is a free event and everyone is welcome. More information is available at [www.thenalc.org](http://www.thenalc.org) or by calling St. John’s at 805-489-1259.

# Reclaiming the Joy of Lutheran Theological Education

One of the aspects of Lutheranism that I have always appreciated and been proud of is the commitment to solid Biblical and theological education of pastors.

We have a rich heritage of deep Scriptural and theological reflection that has been manifested in the preaching and teaching of our pastors since the time of Dr. Martin Luther. Lutheranism has not been a tradition that is shallow or superficial. We deal deeply with the issues of life, sin, death and salvation. Our pastors and theologians have been well-educated to assist such honest wrestling with these concerns from the perspective of God's authoritative, unchanging, Holy Word, as interpreted by our Lutheran Confessions.

I would add that the reason I attended the Lutheran Theological Seminary at Gettysburg was because pastors had told me that this was a seminary that would well educate and prepare a parish pastor to be one who could faithfully read and interpret the Bible and the Book of Concord in such a way that Law and Gospel would be rightly proclaimed and lived out in the life of a Lutheran congregation. I was proud to be a graduate of Gettysburg Seminary. I was also thankful for the many, many congregations, pastors and faithful laypersons who gave so generously through the years to support my seminary financially so that I could one day prepare for ordained ministry on that hallowed campus as had so many before me.

I'm sorry to say that I am no longer proud of the seminary from which I graduated. Most seminaries which NALC pastors attended have seen decline, decay and some are facing death — given the movement away from the teaching of the truth of God's Word, a rejection of traditional Biblical teachings, and an acceptance of "the ways of the world," especially with regard to the good order of creation — male and female, marriage and family.

The NALC does not now recommend seminarians attend any of the seminaries most of our NALC



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## *Ministry Matters*

**Pastor David Wendel**  
Assistant to the Bishop  
for Ministry and Ecumenism

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pastors attended. Similarly, we would not recommend our pastors, congregations or lay members financially support these seminaries of the former American Lutheran Church, Lutheran Church in America, and Evangelical Lutheran Church of Canada, for to do so would be to support and encourage Biblical revisionism, universalism, Gospel reductionism, and rampant political correctness that runs contrary to Holy Scripture.

The great legacy of financial support for seminaries of the Lutheran Church has ended for those of us in the NALC who have believed we could not send contributions to these former seminaries while remaining faithful and obedient Christians. How long has it been since we have sent a donation to a seminary of the Church? For most of us, it's been decades since we stopped contributing to support "our" seminaries.

God in His manifold goodness, however, brings life from death, and renews the Church in its time of need! As God has blessed us with this new North American Lutheran Church, God is also blessing us with the establishment of the North American Lutheran Seminary!

While you will read more about our new seminary elsewhere in this newsletter, I am issuing a call to all of us in the NALC to once again join together in support of "our" seminary! The plan for our new seminary is traditional in some ways, innovative and integrative in other ways, and, most of all, flexible.

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But more, the plan is for our seminary to stand solidly on the truth of God's Word, confessionally Lutheran, committed to deep and faithful theological education of those who will be called into ordained ministry for the generations to come. At the same time, our seminary will provide theological education for those who wish to serve the NALC in other forms of ministry, just as our faculty will be available throughout North America to teach and inspire congregations and lay persons who seek deeper understanding and knowledge.

While the North American Lutheran Seminary will be a seminary for the 21st century, it will provide what we have always valued in our Lutheran seminaries — the passing on of the historic Christian faith grounded in the saving death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Again, I invite you to join together in supporting the North American Lutheran Seminary. All pastors and congregations were sent materials inviting participation in a new (and perhaps "First Annual") NALC Seminary Month. The materials are also available on the NALC website. Each congregation is asked to schedule four consecutive weeks this fall to provide information, education, and offering envelopes to receive gifts to help us build our Theological Education Fund for the establishment of the North American Lutheran Seminary.

The NALC Convocation in August approved the goal of raising \$1 million to get our seminary up and running. There is much work to be done, and much work is underway with the intention of having our Seminary Director in place and the North American Lutheran Seminary functioning near the first of the year. One of the greatest needs, however, is funding.

Ask your pastor or congregational leaders how your congregation or Mission District will be participating in the Seminary Month Appeal. Volunteer to serve on a task force or committee to organize your congregational Seminary Month Appeal. Be in prayer for this NALC-wide appeal and our new seminary. Pray, asking, "Lord, how do you want to use me and my resources for the new NALS?" Prayerfully consider whether you might be a major donor to the seminary to help spur us on the way to

the \$1 million mark. Give — freely, faithfully, cheerfully!

The time for lamenting the state of theological education and our former seminaries has passed. The time for reclaiming the joy of Lutheran theological education for the NALC has come! We pray for an outpouring and an over-flowing of financial support for this endeavor — that the North American Lutheran Seminary will become a reality!

## **Reformation Conference set for North Carolina**

The Department of Lutheran Studies at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary in Charlotte, N.C., an NALC Seminary House of Studies, will host a Reformation Conference on Thursday, Oct. 31.

The conference will feature two afternoon lectures at the seminary followed by a barbeque supper and worship service at a local church.

The featured lectures will be: "A 'Garden' of Weeds: Contemporary Challenges to Faithful Proclamation" by the Rev. Dr. J. Larry Yoder and "Planting a Holy People: Mission and the Nature of the Church" by Dr. David S. Yeago.

The Reformation Worship and Inaugural Service for the Department of Lutheran Studies will follow at Christ Lutheran Church in Charlotte. NALC Bishop John Bradosky will be preaching.

The event is sponsored by the Michael C.D. McDaniel Center for Theology of the Department of Lutheran Studies at Gordon-Conwell. The center is named after Michael C.D. McDaniel (1929-2003), a widely-respected orthodox bishop and teacher. He served as bishop of the North Carolina Synod of the former Lutheran Church in America from 1982 to 1987, and then of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America from 1988 to 1991. Prior to his episcopal call, Bishop McDaniel served as a parish pastor and then from 1971 to 1982 as a professor of religion and philosophy at Lenoir-Rhyne College in Hickory, N.C.

More information is available at [www.thenalc.org](http://www.thenalc.org).

# Mission Connect

## *Trinity Lutheran Church – Gothenburg, Neb. and the Lutheran Church of South Sudan*

**By Pastor Dennis Nelson**

The people of Trinity Lutheran Church of Gothenburg, Neb., feel a close kinship with the Lutheran Christians of South Sudan.

Their congregation and the African country have both been in existence for about the same amount of time — around two years — and both were born out of situations of great struggle.

South Sudan is the world's youngest nation. The country gained its independence from Sudan on July 9, 2011, after a civil war that claimed more than 2.5 million lives.

Trinity Lutheran Church was born out of a failed vote to leave the ELCA. Within a week of the vote, a group of people were worshipping at a different location. Pastor Russ Saltzman, Dean of the NALC's Great Plains Mission District, guided them through the process of forming a new congregation. As they continued to organize, they became ready to call a pastor. They called Pastor Jeff Cottingham to be their spiritual leader.

The congregation is affiliated with both Lutheran Congregations in Mission for Christ and the North American Lutheran Church. They enjoy fellowship and support with the many other LCMC churches in the state of Nebraska, and they appreciate the way in which the NALC was able to help them with the process of incorporating and calling a pastor. According to Pastor Cottingham, with dual affiliation "we get the best of both worlds."

The congregation currently rents meeting space that is too small for them, so they are in the process of undertaking a building program. They are buying land and have just received the first concept drawings of a possible new building. They



*Pastor Jeff Cottingham, Nyanhial Long, Pastor Jordan Long and Pastor Cathi Braasch at Trinity Lutheran Church in Gothenburg, Neb. Nyanhial is Pastor Long's daughter.*

know it will be a very expensive venture. The estimated cost for a first-phase multipurpose room came in at over \$1.3 million.

Many congregations facing costs like that would become focused internally on how they could raise the money for their own building. But not Trinity Lutheran.

Pastor Jeff Cottingham met the Rev. Jordan Long, president of the Lutheran Church of South Sudan, at the NALC Convocation in Golden Valley, Minn., last August.

When Pastor Cottingham was packing to go to the Convocation, he took along two clergy shirts that no longer fit him. When he heard Pastor Long speak, he heard him tell of the people of South Sudan, who will walk for miles and will meet under trees to worship God and to hear the Gospel.

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They can put up a church building for only about \$10,000, which includes the supplies to build the building as well as the transportation costs to get the supplies to the building location. In addition, for only about another \$2,400, that church can have a pastor for an entire year. Pastor Cottingham thought, “Wow! Wouldn’t it be great if we could do that here?”

Pastor Cottingham found Pastor Long to be a man who had an incredible fervor for the Gospel. He was describing a young nation that is just beginning to form and a Lutheran church that is just beginning to emerge.

Pastor Cottingham thought, “What a great opportunity to even have a small part in helping Christians in South Sudan build their church. What a great opportunity to be in on the ground floor of church building.”

And when he heard Pastor Long appeal for supplies for the South Sudanese pastors, he knew why he had brought along those clergy shirts that no longer fit.

Pastor Cottingham invited Pastor Long to come to Nebraska the next time he was in the United States. On Sunday, March 3, 2013, Pastor Long worshiped with them and preached at their morning worship service. He told of a church that is nicknamed “The Church Without Walls,” because the people literally gather under the trees for worship each week. He told of a national church that has about as much infrastructure as their entire nation, which is really nothing. As Pastor Cottingham said, “We have more paved roads in rural Dawson County, Neb., than the entire country of South Sudan.”

Trinity congregation responded by taking up a special offering during the month of March and by designating their April benevolence to go to the Lutheran Church of South Sudan. They have already sent about \$5,300, which was enough to complete a church building that was already in the process of construction. In addition, they have given two chalices and two patens to be used by the African congregations, even though that gift meant that they would not have their own Communion ware.

Pastor Cottingham is in the process of urging the congregations of the Great Plains Mission District of the NALC and Nebraska LCMC churches to consider designating a portion of their benevolence offerings to go toward the Lutheran Church of South Sudan, or to consider taking a special offering. In a letter to these churches he wrote, “Yes, we need to think about our own building program, and we are working on it, but if our churches band together, we could truly make a huge difference for the Sudanese Christians! Imagine how many church buildings we could provide funds toward!”

Pastor Cottingham also hopes that Trinity congregation will be able to build more of a relationship with the Lutheran Christians in South Sudan than just sending funds. He said, “At some point it would be really exciting to be able to send a delegation from our congregation to South Sudan to worship with them.” Then he added, “They have an excitement for the Gospel that we want here.”

When I asked him whether it was difficult to get his people to give money for building a church in South Sudan when they needed to build their own building, he replied, “We have a membership that is so focused on discipleship, evangelism, and mission.

That is what we are all about. That is what we are called to do — to be selfless and look to the needs of others before our own needs.”

If you and/or your congregation would like to respond to Pastor Cottingham’s challenge, Lutheran Church of South Sudan’s partner, the Institute of Lutheran Theology, will accept checks written to ILT that state “LCSS” on the memo line and forward them to the Lutheran Church of Sudan. (Institute of Lutheran Theology; 910 4th Street; Brookings, SD 57006). You also could send support through Trinity Lutheran Church, PO Box 68, Gothenburg, NE 69138. Pastor Cottingham would like to have congregations take up this challenge between now and Reformation Sunday of this year. They are willing to act as an agent for the funds and will send one check, while identifying all congregations who gave as well as the amounts given.

***Reprinted from CORE Connection, the newsletter of Lutheran CORE.***

# Consider hosting a Discipleship Event

**By Pastor Mark Baaten**

One of the wonderful things that the North American Lutheran Church and Lutheran CORE are doing is sponsoring Discipleship Events. Eleven such events have been held in the past few years, and we are looking forward to having many more in the future.

The events focus on discipleship and mission. They are generally held in a local congregation and last for one or two days. (Most events have been Friday night through Saturday.)

A main speaker leads the event. Past speakers have included Bishop John Bradosky, Pastor Gemechis Buba, and Pastor Michael Foss. In addition, individuals from local congregations have led a variety of workshops at most of the events. And, of course, the celebration of worship is central.

It is vital that we lift up and do discipleship and mission. The Discipleship Events are a practical way to grow into that. In addition, a point is made to network pastors and congregations at these events.

If we are to grow into deeper discipleship, we have to do it together. The events are fun and great places to join in this networking.

Discipleship Events have already been hosted in Arizona, Florida, Illinois, Indiana, North Carolina, Ohio, Oregon, Pennsylvania, and Texas. Our hope and prayer is to talk about and share discipleship in local events across North America. And we hope to go even further as we look to connect these events with the exciting work being done in places like Ethiopia and Tanzania!

Written materials to guide you in hosting a Discipleship Event are available, and we will work with you to plan and host your event. Funds are available to help underwrite the costs.

If you would be interested in hosting a Discipleship Event, or if you just have questions, please contact either Pastor Paul Borg at paul@lutheran.com or Pastor Mark Braaten at mbraaten@oslctyler.org.

What a joy and opportunity, as we lift up discipleship across this vast mission field that we share!

## Colorado flood relief efforts

First responders continue search and rescue operations in flood-ravaged Colorado. In addition to Boulder, the community of Longmont has been devastated.

Fifty of the 392 member families of Faith Community Lutheran Church in Longmont (NALC-LCMC) have been impacted — with damage ranging from sewer backups to complete loss of not only their homes and possessions, but also the very land on which the house was built.

The congregation's building has sustained no damage because it

is in the northern part of the community, which was cut in half by the flood waters.

The Faith Community Lutheran Church website — [www.fclc.org](http://www.fclc.org) — includes a way for those who wish to make donations or to volunteer to help with disaster relief efforts.

You may donate to NALC Disaster Relief online at [www.thenalc.org](http://www.thenalc.org) or by sending a gift to:

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

## NALC News

*Published monthly by*

**North American  
Lutheran Church**  
3500 Mill Run Drive  
Hilliard, OH 43026-7770

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**[www.thenalc.org](http://www.thenalc.org)**

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*Please copy and share  
this newsletter widely.*

# Come to the Water of Life and Drink!

*Following is the text of Bishop John Bradosky's sermon at the opening worship of the 2013 NALC Convocation on Aug. 8. The sermon is based on the story of Jesus' encounter with the Samaritan woman from John 4.*

Water is the most studied molecule in the world. Water is a simple triatomic molecule, but its behavior is very complex. No chemist, biologist, or physicist would dare to say that water has been thoroughly studied or that how it functions on a molecular scale in either living or nonliving systems is completely understood.

Water is the substance of life. It makes up more than 65 percent of the human body. Without this precious liquid, we would all die, yet we take it for granted and fail to recognize its significance.

The design of this molecule is so unique and mysterious. Instead of a linear form, it is triangular in shape with unique angles and distinctive electron interaction providing for its many special qualities.

Water's design makes it an excellent solvent. It breaks down substances and transports them. It breaks down elements in our bodies and delivers them to our muscles and carries off wastes.

On a macro level, water causes erosion, breaks down rocks and releases salts and vital elements into the environment. It dissolves them, carrying them down mountains and slopes into streams, lakes, rivers and oceans, making them available to aquatic and terrestrial life. In one year, the world's rivers move about 6,500 cubic miles of material. This cycle has been going on throughout earth's history.

Given its simple composition, chemists would expect water to be a gas at ambient temperature, but because of its design water exists as a liquid. In fact, it is the only naturally-occurring, inorganic liquid found in abundance. Most molecules shrink when they cool. At first, water does contract until it reaches 4 degrees centigrade, and then it expands, becoming less dense. This behavior is unique among all known chemical substances. It turns to



## *From the Bishop*

**Bishop John Bradosky**

ice, and then it floats — forming a protective blanket for marine life.

Water's design gives it a high heat capacity, insuring that water temperatures remain stable and don't change too rapidly — making water supremely suitable for global climate stabilization. This design creates currents in the oceans and winds in the atmosphere that balance the heat and cold around the world. That same capacity is essential for cooling the bodies of animals and humans through perspiration and evaporation. What is more: that same process enables each cell in the human body to function at a normal temperature during the chemical reactions of metabolism and reproduction. Water's thermal conductivity creates consistency and stability for the body and for the earth.

Water's design gives it a high surface tension. That tension is the driving force behind absorption. This enables our bodies to pass nutrients from capillaries in our blood stream to the cells in our muscles. That same capillary action means that a liquid will be drawn into narrow spaces without any assistance from an external force. This wicking effect of capillary action is essential for every plant on earth as it pulls food and liquid from its roots into the branches and leaves. Water's viscosity is perfect for this interaction. Just a little thicker or just a little thinner and life would not be possible. The design of water when it contains red blood cells creates another unique phenomenon. Its viscosity decreases with pressure. So when your heart has to beat faster the blood becomes thinner — enabling your muscles to get the oxygen and nutrients they need and making it easier for the heart to pump.

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Everything around us — from the tiniest cell to the planet's climate — is influenced by water. In the deepest reaches of the earth, it lubricates the tectonic plates. Water covers more than 70 percent of the earth's surface. It is abundant here but extremely rare in the universe. It is one of the reasons that life as we know it is improbable in any other place in the universe. It reminds us that the earth was finely tuned for life.

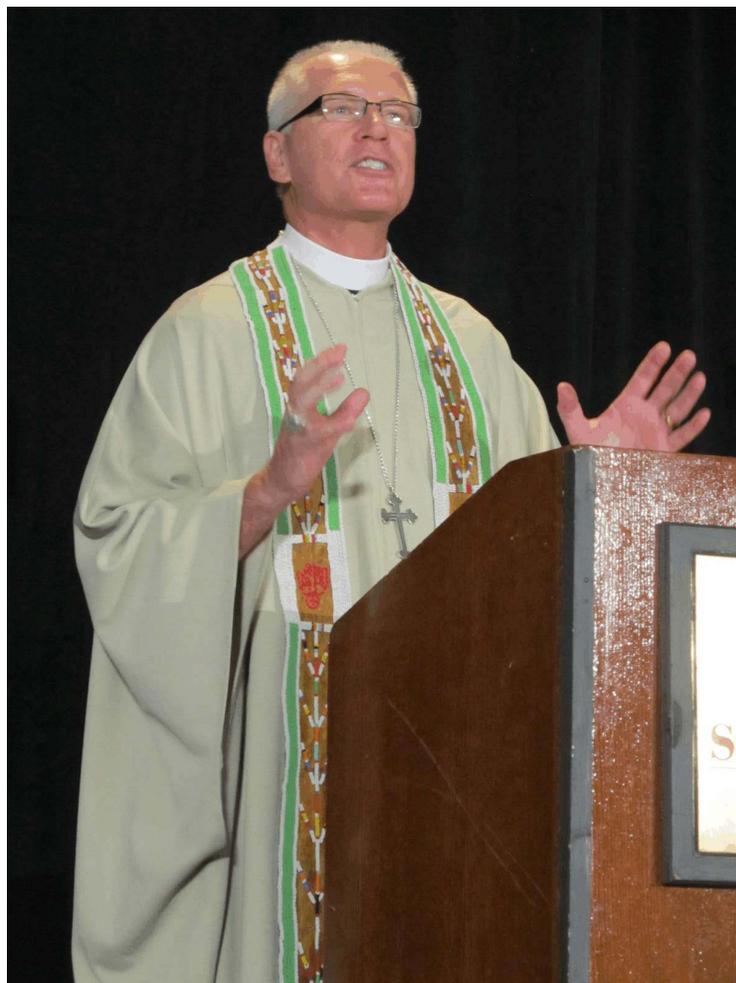
I have just scratched the surface, giving you a mere glimpse into the wonder of water.

Chemists, physicists and biologists who study the nature of this unique molecule, water, are growing in support of intelligent design. They already conclude that water was specifically designed for life. We pray this miracle molecule will lead them to the Miracle Worker — the Creator revealed in Scripture and the One who knew all about the life-giving qualities of water that were an appropriate analogy of the life available through faith in Him, the truth He revealed to the woman at the well in Samaria.

Since the subject of worship and liturgical practice are also raised in this text, it would be easy to use this text as a jumping off point to discuss the symbolism of water in the religious life of Christians. Water is a symbol of life, cleansing, purification and birth in both the Old and New Testaments. In the Flood and the flight of Israel, it destroys evil and enemies. Water brings healing for Naaman, the Syrian, and for all who could lower themselves into the pool at Jerusalem. It was a part of sacrificial offerings.

It is a reminder of birth — as the baby grows in the protection of amniotic fluid and the delivery begins with the breaking of the water. It is also a symbol of death — buried with Christ, drown in the waters of Baptism and just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we also walk in newness of life (Romans 6:4). Water is a powerful symbol of both: destruction and life, judgement and celebration, grief and joy.

Water is the essential earthly element in Baptism. Through the work of the Holy Spirit, the water connected to the Word is a means of Grace,



***Bishop John Bradosky preaching at the opening worship of the 2013 NALC Convocation.***

connecting us by faith to the source of forgiveness and life that is eternal. In obedience to Christ, we baptize in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit — the Triune God — with a triangular-shaped molecule called H<sub>2</sub>O — water.

For some, water is also connected with the Eucharist. Both wine and water are used to recall the witness of Scripture: “One of the soldiers pierced His side with a spear and at once blood and water came out” (John 19:34). The life that flows through Christ in this sacrament is also at work in us through the Eucharist. In both sacraments, this well-spring of the water of life — Jesus Christ — comes to us, abides with us, and transforms us.

That is all a backdrop for the text before us today. (It is also an example of how easy it is to use the text as a platform for jumping off onto other subjects and never giving the text a chance to speak.)

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The setting of this interaction between Jesus and this Samaritan woman — a well — should remind us that we need to go deeper. In many ways, that is the course of Jesus' interaction with this woman and a great prototype for our witness to others. It starts with a basic human need — thirst — and finding a means of satisfying that need — obtaining a drink of water. The woman and Jesus meet with the same need. She has come to draw water for her and her family, and Jesus is waiting for her to come and draw from the well and satisfy His thirst.

Jesus begins the interaction by asking her for a drink, acknowledging that she has something to offer, something to give. She is a person of value and worth. This is His invitation to her: to draw closer, to go deeper.

Her immediate response is not unlike most people: to make excuses, to focus on the barriers, to see only the limitations to this relationship with Jesus. "How can you ask me?" She defines Jesus in her own terms and separates herself from Him. She fires back: "You are a Jew, and I am a Samaritan, a woman at that."

Notice that Jesus is not put off by the distance she tries to create. He invites her to go deeper by inviting her to give up her preconceived notions and know Him. "If you only knew who it is asking you for a drink you could ask Him and He would give you living water."

Again she resists by returning to the water and the well. Indirectly, she is saying to Jesus: "Who do you think you are? You don't even have the means to draw water from the well. You have no container to hold the water. Do you think you are more important than the Patriarchs of our faith, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob who gave us this well? Are you more important than all who ever drank from this well?"

Jesus lets her stay with the water and then takes her deeper yet. He speaks of the water as a symbol of His own identity. Drink from the well, and you will continue to be thirsty. Drink from the water I will give you, and you will never thirst again. In fact, you will have a spring flowing inside of you that will well up to eternal life! Jesus is the source, the well-spring of the water of life.

At first, the woman is interested in the offer as a matter of convenience. "Give me some of that water, so I don't have to keep coming back here. Make my life easier, Jesus." However, at this point it is going to get harder.

There is another barrier that she will have to deal with, and this loving Lord wants her to face her sin, past and present. So Jesus offers another invitation to take her deeper in this relationship. "Go call your husband and come back." Faith is a relationship with Jesus, so how does she treat relationships? She offers a flippant response, trying to hide the truth. "I don't have a husband!"

Jesus is about to take her deeper still into the truth about her current condition. He knows her past and her present. Notice how he starts out affirming that there was some truth in her description. Haven't we all been where she is? We defend ourselves by offering a partial truth. We talk about our life in half-truths, never wanting to risk revealing the whole truth. We fear others knowing the truth, convinced that once they know, they will reject us. Jesus, knowing all there is to know about us, loves us still. He says, "You don't have a husband, you have had five, and the one you have is not your husband."

There is a glimmer of hope. She acknowledges that Jesus is unlike any other person she has known — a prophet with information coming from God.

Jesus has drawn her even closer, and she doesn't deny the truth but instead tries to erect another barrier. She goes back to the Jews and Samaritan distinction, Jerusalem and Mt. Gerizim, the place of worship instead of the state of worship. Instead of rejecting her for being a Samaritan, Jesus points to the future of worshiping God in Spirit and in Truth regardless of location or identity.

She believes the Messiah is coming and when he comes he will explain everything. She trusts in God's promises and she lays out the faith she has, perhaps already wondering what more Jesus will say about Himself. And He does. Jesus says that He is the Messiah, the Christ. This is far deeper than she ever imagined this conversation would go. She knows who Jesus is. She knows Jesus!

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There is a way to go even deeper. Leaving behind her water pots — the reason she came to the well in the first place — she goes back to her town, telling people about Jesus — who knew everything about her past — telling them to come and see and asking, “Could this be the one, the Messiah, the Christ?” They go to check out her story. They meet Jesus and ask Him to stay. At first they believe because of her testimony. Then they check it out for themselves, and even more believe because they have heard for themselves, and they conclude: “This man is the Savior of the world!”

Jesus is driven by a deeper thirst for sharing the Gospel, for sharing His identity, revealing the truth, drawing people to faith in Him, the living water.

This text is a wonderful example of evangelism and discipleship. It is a great model for overcoming resistance with invitations that pull people deeper into understanding fully who Jesus is. It is a prime example of faithful witnessing.

The problem is that we don’t have much to report or share if we don’t know who Jesus is. Institutional belonging cannot compensate for knowing Christ, proclaiming Christ, and inviting others to faith in Christ.

Even among Christians, I am amazed at how few believe that Jesus is a reliable source of information about our lives. We often consider our sophisticated wisdom far superior to His outdated knowledge. In our culture, Jesus is automatically disassociated from brilliance or intellectual capacity. It is no small wonder that people are not flocking to become his disciples.

Dallas Willard writes, “Far too often Jesus is regarded as hardly conscious. He is taken as a mere icon, a wraith-like semblance of a man living on the margins of the ‘real life’ where you and I must dwell. He is perhaps fit for the role of sacrificial lamb or alienated social critic, but little more.”

What lies at the heart of this astonishing disregard for Jesus is that professing Christians are uninformed about His nature and identity and therefore have little respect for Him. If we don’t

respect Jesus, how can we worship Him? Why would we follow Him, give our lives for Him, or make disciples of all nations?

In the early days of the Church, they worshiped Jesus, boldly proclaimed Jesus, followed Jesus, believed in Jesus’ nature and identity as revealed in the Scripture. They not only respected Jesus, but as Paul clarifies in Colossians 2:3, they believed that “in Jesus are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.”

In the midst of a world bombarded by misinformation that leaves us to be manipulated into misery by our own selfish desires and the wills of those who would misuse us, Jesus offers us the vital information of who we are, why we live, the nature of the problems we face, and the source of hope and transformation through the water of life that longs to well up in us through faith in Him.

While we have already fallen from God’s intentions for us, Jesus can restore us into the flow of God’s life if we will only count on Him for everything. That is, we must trust Him and take up His cause, His “yoke” (Matthew 11:29). Then He will teach us how to make our choices with the aim of glorifying God and loving our neighbor. His life flowing through us is the most exhilarating kind of life imaginable. As this love flows through us, it transforms our character. As it wells up in us, it spills over into our everyday activities. We begin to act in His name, on His behalf. As we encounter people seeking the most fundamental human needs, like the woman at the well, we have the opportunity to draw them deeper into Christ with invitations that overcome all objections and resistance.

Trusting in Jesus as the preeminent teacher for all of life, His life can flow through us to accomplish His redemptive purposes. By following Jesus, we proclaim not our answers but His Good News to the poor and all in need of hope. Those imprisoned by sin are set free through the forgiveness only Jesus can provide. Those who are blinded by the world or their own wisdom can glimpse His Kingdom and Truth that is eternal. Those oppressed by all that is evil find deliverance and new life. All this begins with having enough respect for Him to acknowledge Him as the One who has the most reliable

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information about our lives. How else could He be our Lord and our Savior?

I am convinced Jesus wanted His followers to be certain of who He is. This must be the direction of our proclamation and study as well as the focus of our witness: to let people know who Jesus is. Jesus is Immanuel, God with us. Jesus is God in person, God in flesh made manifest. He is the Messiah, God's anointed one. He is the wisest person who ever walked on this earth. He knows every detail of

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***This power to forgive and give us eternal life cannot come from within us but only from Christ. That is the process of discipleship growing deeper in Christ, until He is all that matters and all there is. In Him alone is life, faith, salvation, redemption, and grace, a reservoir that never stops flowing.***

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every system that was ever put together because He created them all. All the mysteries of water we are still exploring, He knows. No scientist knows more; no historian knows more; no anthropologist know more; no zoologist knows more; no doctor knows more. In every discipline the knowledge of Jesus is far superior. If you don't know who Jesus is, it is hard to trust Him enough to permit your connection with Him to grow deeper.

This connection is very powerful and amazing, but it reminds me of an illustration regarding electricity. It

is the story of a lady who had a small house on the seashore of Ireland at the turn of the century. She was quite wealthy but also quite frugal. The people were surprised, then, when she decided to be among the first to have electricity in her home. Several weeks after the installation, a meter reader appeared at her door. He asked if her electricity was working well, and she assured him it was. "I'm wondering if you can explain something to me," he said. "Your meter shows scarcely any usage. Are you using your power?" "Certainly," she answered. "Each evening when the sun sets, I turn on my lights just long enough to light my candles, then I turn them off! She tapped into the power but doesn't use it." Her house was connected but not altered.

Don't we make the same mistake? We have some understanding of who Jesus is but we don't dwell on it. We don't let His power transform us. We accept the love of Jesus, but our hearts and minds remain unchanged — connected but not altered. We occasionally flip the switch, but most of the time we settle for shadows. What would happen if we left the light on? What would happen if we not only flipped on the switch but lived in the light? What changes would occur if we let this well-spring of the water of life flow through us like electricity through its circuits. When He wells up in us we have His power to handle our anger, overcome our hopelessness, and heal our broken relationships. This power to forgive and give us eternal life cannot come from within us but only from Christ. That is the process of discipleship growing deeper in Christ, until He is all that matters and all there is. In Him alone is life, faith, salvation, redemption, and grace, a reservoir that never stops flowing.

As we pursue discipleship we are committed to helping our people grow in their confidence of who Jesus is, opening ourselves through Word and Sacrament, devotion and prayer to overcome all barriers and let the water flow, until it overflows from our lives into a world longing to know Him and follow Him, a world thirsty for this life-giving water. We drink Him in and offer others the living water so they will never thirst again. Let this be our invitation as well: "Come to the Water of Life and Drink."

In the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.  
Amen.

# The Art of Congregational Singing

I have just enough musical training in my background (mostly choral work and piano) to have strong opinions regarding congregational singing. One of those strong viewpoints is my conviction that pastors and worship leaders do not always appreciate the importance of congregational singing in maintaining a healthy, inspiring worship dynamic.

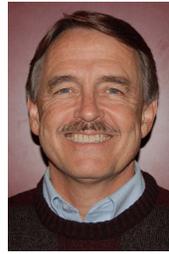
Before diving into some practical suggestions on this topic, understand that these guidelines hold true whether the hymns or songs are traditional or more contemporary in style. *One theological point I want to make — to set the framework for the following guidelines — is that the more participatory our worship music, the better.* When worship music is more about performance than participation we are neglecting a very important part of our Lutheran heritage.

So, when it comes to participatory congregational singing, here are some guidelines I urge you to consider:

**First, generally speaking, the more *familiar* a musical selection, the more participation you will have by your worshipers.** This sounds self-evident; however, many pastors and worship leaders too often select new and unfamiliar hymns and songs.

Why would they do this, knowing the participation level of worshipers will be negatively impacted? Sometimes the motive is the conviction that the congregation *needs* something new — either to “broaden their horizons” or to prevent boredom. On other occasions the unfamiliar composition will be chosen for the lyrics; in total disregard of the difficulty of the music. (Trust me: If worshipers are struggling with the music they are probably not appreciating the lyrics.)

Those who select hymns and musical liturgies often have more musical training than the great majority of their worshipers. As a result they can grow bored of more familiar hymns long before most of the congregation. Or, a completely unfamiliar hymn or song might be chosen because of a particular season or feast day of the church year, or to fit the sermon theme for a given Sunday. Maybe those selecting the hymn know how to sight read new music and forget that most of their members do not. In other



## *In Pursuit of the Great Commission*

**Pastor Don Brandt**

words, they may be thinking, “This new song isn’t all that difficult; they’ll catch on soon enough.”

When an entirely unfamiliar hymn/song is needed, my recommendation is to take the time to teach this new composition to your members. “Teaching” often requires nothing more than a soloist, ensemble or choir singing through the first verse before the congregation then joins them in singing that same verse. Or, if you want to ease your people into a new song — and it has a chorus or refrain — just teach them the refrain the first Sunday. Your music leader(s) will then sing the verses alone with the congregation joining them for the refrain. Then, the next Sunday, the congregation can sing the entire hymn.

**Second, the more musically complex a composition, the less participatory it will be.** Some of those with musical training might balk at this, perhaps considering “easy” music to be a classic case of “dumbing down” our worship music. Or they will point out that members quickly grow bored or inattentive with overly-familiar music. I would agree with this concern when it comes to liturgical music that is sung weekly. However, you must factor in that most of our hymns and songs are sung perhaps four to six times each year and that not all active members might be in attendance on one or more of those Sundays. Given these realities, it is important that your worshipers are familiar enough with the selected hymns — even on an occasional basis — to still sing these compositions with confidence.

Complicating this complexity issue is that some worship leaders and pastors are convinced that only they — and not their congregants — know what constitutes “quality” music. Even if that were true, I

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would encourage them to have particularly complex compositions performed (e.g., as an anthem or a portion of the liturgy) rather than force the congregation to struggle to sing them.

A final point on this matter of complexity: If you use contemporary songs be careful not to use songs that — based on their complexity, rhythm or range — were composed for performance, not worship.

**Third, pay attention to the *number of worshipers in attendance at any given service.*** The general rule is that, the lower your attendance, the more familiar your musical selections need to be. I have found that, in *most* sanctuaries (acoustics can vary) fewer than 50 to 75 in attendance requires a certain degree of caution in your hymn selection. The sad truth is that many of our worshipers are extremely insecure and self-conscious when it comes to singing in public. And the smaller the group, the more self-conscious they tend to be. As a matter of fact, if your regular worship attendance is below 50, you might want to contemplate having less worship music overall. Consider a “service of the word” for most of your liturgy, limiting the total number of (familiar!) hymns to two or three per service. Few experiences in worship are more emotionally and physically exhausting than being one of 25 worshipers singing hymns composed and intended for groups of 100 or more. (Good examples of this are some German chorales.)

**Fourth, consider the musical range of the melody line.** Speaking of treble clef singers (female voices, with men’s voices/bass clef being an octave below this), I have found that the best range for a hymn or song melody is that it not be any lower than a B natural below middle C, and not higher than a D natural, eight notes above middle C. That means a range of 10 notes.

Obviously, you don’t want to be legalistic about this, because a number of familiar and popular traditional hymns exceed this range. And sometimes a new composition is so good that it needs to be one of the exceptions any such “rule.” But be cautious, because too wide a range — especially when it is too high — negatively impacts congregational participation.

In looking at musical ranges in the *Lutheran Book of Worship* (green hymnal), there are numerous cases

where the voice range of a frequently chosen hymn is too high. Examples include “Open Now Thy Gates of Beauty” (#252), “Savior, Like a Shepherd Lead Us” (#481), and “He Leadeth Me” (#501). These hymn keys are in contrast to the singing range of “Amazing Grace” (#448), “Love Divine, All Loves Excelling” (#315), and “Beautiful Savior” (#518). When you find a particular key is too high, search out a lower key for your organist or pianist. But when that isn’t possible, be cautious about too often selecting hymn keys that might be problematic for some of your members. And something else: Generally speaking, the older the worshiper, the more limited his or her musical range.

**Finally, err on the side of too much “up front” vocal support for congregational singing.** This is far better than too little. (But don’t over-amplify!) Strong vocal leadership — whether by individuals, vocal teams, or choirs — helps your congregants sing with more confidence and enthusiasm. And that up-front support needs to include a clear melody line; *especially* when a selection is unfamiliar. Too much harmony when the song is unfamiliar will only confuse your congregation.

Hymn selection is a case where the opinions and recommendations of your members are especially crucial. The two best ways to measure their opinions are their volume when they sing a particular hymn and asking them. “Asking them” might involve a congregational survey, perhaps annually or every other year. Simply ask them to identify a few hymns they wish they could sing “more often” and a couple of hymns they’d prefer to sing “less often.”

The most spiritually and emotionally intense moments I have experienced in worship have been when my congregation has sung with confidence and enthusiasm. Perhaps the single most important way we can increase the frequency of these moments is by being more thoughtful and careful in our selection and presentation of particular hymns and songs.

And what does any of the above have to do with the Great Commission? Your worship music dynamic is not only important to your members; it makes a crucial first impression on your visitors and guests. The more enthusiastic your congregational singing, the more likely those first-time visitors will return.

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# Golden Confirmation event held at Emmanuel Lutheran in Grafton, Iowa

Emmanuel Lutheran Church in Grafton, Iowa, hosted a Golden Confirmation celebration on Sunday, Aug. 25. About 120 Golden Confirmands and their spouses gathered for a day of worship, fellowship and a dinner.

The congregation extended 243 invitations to men and women who had been confirmed at the church in 1963 or in prior years.

Guests from as far away as California, Oregon and South Carolina, together with those who stayed in the Midwest, shared stories from their days as confirmation students and gave updates on their lives and families.

While a festive worship service with a *Remembrance of Baptism* was the focus of the day, the building was alive with conversation and laughter from the early morning hours until well into the afternoon.

The preparations for the day took close to nine months as many mailing addresses had to be researched and gathered by members of the Evangelism Committee.

When asked for the reason of this celebration, Pastor Solveig Zamzow, the pastor of Emmanuel, said: "The celebration of a Golden Confirmation is a well-known observance in European countries, especially Germany, and therefore part of Emmanuel's deepest roots. Our reasons, however, go well beyond such history. This was an



*Members and former members of Emmanuel Lutheran Church in Grafton, Iowa, pose for a group photo. They gathered for a Golden Confirmation celebration.*

opportunity to remind people of the beginning of their own faith journey and those with whom they shared such first steps.

"We embraced this day by recommitting ourselves to the God who first reached out to us in Baptism and always remains faithful to His promises. Likewise, we celebrated what it means to be the Communion of Saints in this time and place, bringing our stories to the story of God with humanity.

"We rejoiced in the blessings we have received and are to each other and the world. Last, but not least, this day served as a signal that Emmanuel Lutheran Church still is an important and willing participant in the faith community of the wider Grafton area and that we are committed to remain a beacon of hope and light for years to come. We could not be more pleased to have been granted this day of joyous reunion in the name of our Lord," Pastor Zamzow said.