

NALC News

North American Lutheran Church

May 2014

16 pastors nominated for NALC Executive Council

Sixteen pastors and five lay people have been nominated to fill three positions on the NALC Executive Council.

The 2014 NALC Convocation July 24-25 in Charleston, S.C., will elect one pastor and one lay person to fill four-year terms on the Executive Council.

Delegates will also elect a pastor to a three-year term to fill a position on the Executive Council vacated when the Rev. Dr. Amy Schifrin was called to lead the North American Lutheran Seminary. Pastor Eddy Perez of Miami, Fla., was appointed to fill that position until the 2014 NALC Convocation.

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



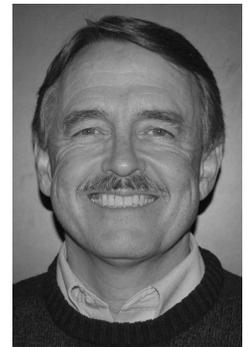
Donald Allman



Lyle Belleque



Mark Braaten



Don Brandt



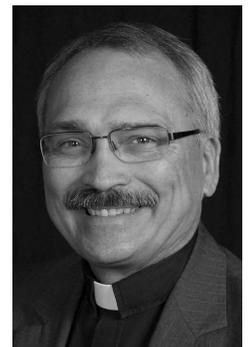
Steve Dornbusch



Joseph Freeman



Phillip Gagnon



Marshall Hahn



Melinda Jones



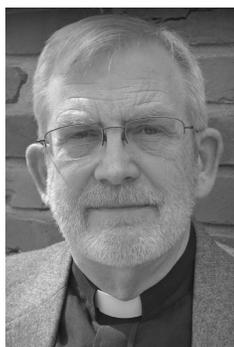
E. McClanahan



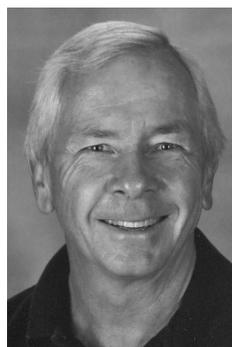
Eddy Perez



Marty Ramey



Continued on Page 2 *Russell Saltzman*



Daniel Selbo



David Steffenson



Al Towberman

5 lay nominees for Executive Council

Continued from Page 1

The Nominating Committee has divided the clergy nominees into separate slates for the two positions:

Executive Council - Clergy - 3-year term

- + Pastor Mark Braaten, Tyler, Texas.
- + Pastor Don Brandt, Salem, Ore.
- + Pastor Joseph Freeman, Noblesville, Ind.
- + Pastor Phillip Gagnon, Edmonton, Alberta
- + Pastor Eddy Perez, Miami, Fla.
- + Pastor Marty Ramey, Dallas, N.C.
- + Pastor Dan Selbo, San Jose, Calif.
- + Pastor David Steffenson, Rochester, Minn.

Executive Council - Clergy - 4-year term

- + Pastor Donald Allman, Grove City, Ohio.
- + Pastor Lyle Belleque, Devils Lake, N.D.
- + Pastor Steven Dornbusch, Plymouth, Minn.
- + Pastor Marshall Hahn, St. Olaf, Iowa.
- + Pastor Melinda Jones, North Charleston, S.C.
- + Pastor Evan McClanahan, Houston, Texas.
- + Pastor Russell Saltzman, Kansas City, Mo.
- + Pastor Alden Towberman, Butler, Pa.

Lay nominees for Executive Council are: Richard Jansak of Hendersonville, N.C., Stephen Lord of Colorado Springs, Colo., Franklin Merrell of Salisbury, N.C., William Petmecky of Fredericksburg, Texas, and Brian Sutton of Statesville, N.C.



Richard Jansak



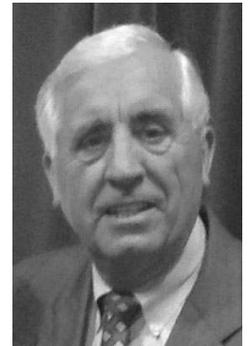
Stephen Lord



Franklin Merrell



Bill Petmecky



Brian Sutton

Congregations and NALC members were asked to submit nominations for the positions to the Nominating Committee.

The Nominating Committee asked each nominee to complete a biographical information form.

Biographical information provided by the nominees is provided as a supplement to the May *NALC News* available for download at www.thenalc.org.

Nominees for Court of Adjudication

James Gale and Pastor K. Glen Johnson have been nominated for the NALC Court of Adjudication. The 2014 NALC Convocation will elect two members of the court to four-year terms.

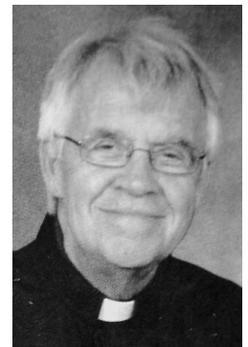
James Gale, an attorney in Washington, D.C., has served on the Court of Adjudication since the founding of the NALC. He was involved in the drafting of the NALC constitution and other governing documents.

Pastor Johnson is pastor of Ascension Lutheran Church in Calgary. He served as the president of Augustana University College (formerly known as Camrose Lutheran College) in Camrose, Alberta, for 28 years.

The Court of Adjudication hears disciplinary claims and appeals from disciplinary decisions and resolves questions of the interpretation of NALC governing documents.



James Gale



K. Glen Johnson

Biographical information on the candidates is available for download at www.thenalc.org.

23 nominated for North American Lutheran Seminary Board of Regents

The 2014 NALC Convocation July 24-25 in Charleston, S.C., will elect the members of the Board of Regents for the North American Lutheran Seminary.

The Convocation will elect nine members to a variety of terms to establish the Board of Regents. In the future, three members of the board will be elected to six-year terms every other year. Twenty-three people have been nominated for the nine positions.

The establishment of the North American Lutheran Seminary was approved by the 2013 NALC Convocation. The proposal calls for a Seminary Center at Trinity School for Ministry in Ambridge, Pa., and Houses of Studies to be located throughout North America as needed.

An interim Board of Regents has worked with the Rev. Dr. Amy Schifrin, Seminary President, and other NALS faculty for the first year of the seminary.

The Nominating Committee asked each nominee to complete a biographical information form.

Biographical information provided by the nominees is available online at thenalc.org.

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Trevor Armstrong



Wendy Berthelsen



Mari Dew



Donna Evans



Phillip Gagnon



Jeffray Greene



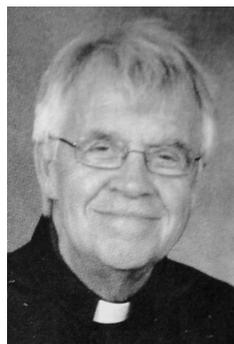
John Harmon



Thomas Jacobson



Ben Johnson



K. Glen Johnson



Roger Keller



Victor Kolch



Kris Madsen



Franklin Merrell



Dieter Punt



Mark Ryman



Hans Scherner

Continued from Page 3

The Nominating Committee divided the nominees into separate slates based on length of term. Three board members will be elected from each slate of candidates:

Board of Regents - 2-year term

(Three persons to be elected)

- + Donna Evans, Pittsburgh, Pa.
- + Pastor Jeffray Greene, Rantoul Ill.
- + Pastor John Harmon, Berlin, Pa.
- + Pastor Thomas Jacobson, Menno, S.D.
- + Pastor Benjamin Johnson, St. Cloud, Minn.
- + Pastor K. Glen Johnson, Calgary, Alberta.
- + Frank Merrell, Salisbury, N.C.
- + Pastor Hans Scherner, Bucyrus, Ohio.
- + Bishop Paull Spring, State College, Pa.

Board of Regents - 4-year term

(Three persons to be elected)

- + Pastor Wendy Berthelsen, Midlothian, Texas.
- + Pastor Phillip Gagnon, St. Albert, Alberta.
- + Pastor Victor Kolch, Fort Wayne, Ind.
- + Pastor Donna Smith, Champaign, Ill.
- + Pastor Eric Waters, Powell, Ohio.
- + Pastor Nathan Yoder, Maiden, N.C.
- + Pastor Solveig Zamzow, Grafton, Iowa.

Board of Regents - 6-year term

(Three persons to be elected)

- + Trevor Armstrong, St. Albert, Alberta.
- + Mari Dew, Connersville, Ind.
- + Pastor Roger Keller, Cabot, Pa.
- + Pastor Kristopher Madsen, Fresno, Calif.
- + Pastor Dieter Punt, Statesville, N.C.
- + Pastor Mark Ryman, Asheboro, N.C.
- + Dr. Roy Schwarz, Winchester, Va.



M. Roy Schwarz



Donna Smith



Paull Spring



Eric Waters



Nathan Yoder



Solveig Zamzow

Nominations close June 9

It is still possible to nominate people for the Executive Council, Court of Adjudication, and Board of Regents.

According to the NALC Constitution (10.03), "Three or more delegates representing at least three congregations may together submit an additional nomination in writing. To be in order, the nomination, together with supporting biographical information, must be submitted to the Nominating Committee no later than 45 days prior to the Convocation." Please send additional nominations by June 9 to nominations@thenalc.org.

Bishop Bradosky to host Holy Land tour

NALC Bishop John Bradosky will host a pilgrimage to the Holy Land Nov. 13-22, 2014.

The pilgrimage to Israel includes daily breakfast and dinner, sailing on the Sea of Galilee, Communion at the Garden Tomb, Jerusalem's Via Delarosa, Bethlehem, Nazareth, and more. There is an optional extension to Petra, Jordan.

The tour is scheduled to leave from Columbus, Ohio; however, departure from other cities can be requested pending airline confirmation.

To request a flyer and trip itinerary, contact Pam Charas at mcharas@earthlink.net or Jerusalem Tours at 888-373-8687 or visit their website at www.jerusalemstours.com.

NALC Convocation is July 24-25

Convocations and Theological Conference to be at The Citadel

“Standing With...to Withstand” will be the theme for the 2014 Convocation of the North American Lutheran Church July 24-25 in Charleston, S.C.

The theme is based on Ephesians 6:10-20, where St. Paul describes the whole armor of God, encouraging followers of Jesus to “put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day.”

The Convocation will focus on the persecution of Christians throughout the world, and our hope to “stand with” these disciples as they witness to the Gospel of Jesus Christ, in spite of opposition and, in some places, suffering.

The Convocation — which will begin at 8:30 a.m. on Thursday, July 24, and conclude at 5 p.m. Friday — will include:

- + Reception of reports and sharing of information about the life and ministry of the NALC.

- + Election of persons to open Executive Council and Court of Adjudication positions.

- + Update on the establishment of the North American Lutheran Seminary and the election of representatives to the NALS Board of Regents.

- + Updates about the discipleship initiative being undertaken in partnership with The Navigators, together with small-group breakout sessions about discipleship.

- + A keynote presentation by Robert Brock of Voice of the Martyrs, a ministry dedicated to supporting persecuted Christians around the world.

- + Welcoming Bishop Roland Gustafsson and the Rev. Bengt Birgersson, General Secretary of the Swedish (Lutheran) Mission Province, who are “Bringing the Gospel Back to Sweden.”

- + Report on the NALC’s application for membership in the Lutheran World Federation.

- + Welcome and receive greetings from guests from the IKBG — International Christian Network, an ecumenical confessional association headquartered in Germany.

- + Displays which will introduce NALC missions and ministries, together with the chance to meet other NALC members from across North America.

- + Traditional Carolina-style barbeque hosted by the Carolinas Mission District at The Citadel’s Isle of Palms Beach House on the Atlantic coast on Thursday evening.

- + Festive Service of Holy Communion on Friday morning with Bishop Gustafsson as preacher.

The NALC Convocation will be preceded by three significant gatherings.

Lutheran CORE’s Convocation will meet July 21-22 under the theme “Sharing the Hope that is in Us.” The Lutheran CORE Convocation is set to begin at 7 p.m. on Monday, July 21. Featured speakers include the Rev. Dr. Gemechis Buba, NALC Assistant to the Bishop for Missions; the Rev. Dr. Walter Sundberg, Professor of Church History at Luther Seminary; and Pastor Stéphane Kalonji of Reformation Lutheran Church, an NALC congregation in New Bern, N.C.

The annual Theological Conference sponsored by the NALC and Lutheran CORE is held between the Convocations. “Rightly Handling the Word of Truth: Scripture, Canon and Creed” is the theme of the conference which begins at 7 p.m. on July 22.

The Women of the NALC Annual Gathering is on Wednesday, July 23. This year’s theme is “We are His Workmanship ... Created for Good Works.” Pastor Heidi Punt is the keynote speaker.

Registration information for all four events will be sent to NALC congregations and available soon at www.thenalc.org. A list of hotels offering discounted rates is available at thenalc.org/2014-convocation.

2014 Theological Conference

Rightly Handling the Word of Truth: Scripture, Canon and Creed

“Rightly Handling the Word of Truth: Scripture, Canon and Creed” is the theme of the 2014 Theological Conference July 22-23 at The Citadel in Charleston, S.C.



Robert Benne



Mark Granquist



Stephen Hultgren



R. David Nelson

The annual theological conference is sponsored by the North American Lutheran Church and Lutheran CORE and is held between their Convocations.

Dr. Robert Benne, one of the conference organizers, will open the Theological Conference with a reflection on the theme. Dr. Benne is the Jordan Trexler Professor Emeritus and Research Associate at Roanoke College in Salem, Va.

Dr. Benne’s introduction will be followed by six major presentations. Speakers for the Theological Conference and their topics include:



Amy Schiffrin



Christopher Seitz



David Yeago

**The Scripture Controversy
in American Lutheranism
Infallibility, Inerrancy, Inspiration**

The Rev. Dr. Mark A. Granquist
Associate Professor of Church History
Luther Seminary - St. Paul, Minn.

**On Being “Lovers of Truth”
The Canon of Scripture and
the Church’s Commitment to Truth**

The Rev. Dr. Stephen J. Hultgren
Lecturer in New Testament
Australian Lutheran College - Adelaide, Australia

**What Is Theological Exegesis?
Practical Resources
for Preaching the Gospel Today**

Dr. R. David Nelson
Lutheran Theologian and Acquisitions Editor
Baker Academic and Brazos Press

**Knowing the Bible through Worship
and the Liturgy**

The Rev. Dr. Amy Schiffrin
President
North American Lutheran Seminary
Associate Professor of Liturgy and Homiletics
Trinity School for Ministry - Ambridge, Pa.

**The Ethics of Sex, Marriage, and the Family
According to the Bible**

The Rev. Dr. Christopher Seitz
Senior Research Professor
Wycliffe College - Toronto School of Theology

**Luther’s Way of Reading and Interpreting
the Bible**

Dr. David S. Yeago
Professor of Systematic Theology and Ethics
North American Lutheran Seminary

Lutheran World Federation will not approve NALC membership

Lutheran World Federation leaders will not approve the North American Lutheran Church's application to join the worldwide Lutheran body.

In a letter dated May 7, 2014, the Rev. Martin Junge, General Secretary of the Lutheran World Federation, has informed NALC leaders that "the LWF communion office will not, for now, pursue further discussions with NALC regarding its application for membership in the LWF. This means that the NALC membership application remains pending."

Even though the letter indicated that the NALC's membership "remains pending," the letter stated that LWF leaders will not be proceeding with the NALC's application for membership.

"In effect, the leadership of the Lutheran World Federation is not approving our application for full membership," explained NALC Bishop John Bradosky in a May 14 message to pastors and congregations.

"A full and complete report of the LWF action, and our response, will be forthcoming," the bishop said.

The 2012 NALC Convocation approved a resolution seeking membership in the LWF. That resolution was then ratified by NALC congregations.

The LWF is a global communion of 142 churches in the Lutheran tradition, representing over 72 million Christians in 79 countries.

NALC completes negotiations with IRS

The North American Lutheran Church has completed U.S. tax-exemption documentation with the Internal Revenue Service.

Written recognition by the IRS of the tax-exempt status of NALC congregations and Mission Districts was received in May.

Previously, the NALC had obtained documentation of tax-exempt status for the denomination, but the "umbrella" application on behalf of NALC congregations and Mission Districts individually had not been fully approved by the government.

All local congregations in the United States are tax-exempt in and of themselves, but it can be helpful to have written recognition of this status from the federal government.

For example, NALC congregations have found it necessary to document their tax-exempt status in order to work with other charitable organizations such as food banks, and to obtain donations from corporate entities, such as equipment and materials for mission trips.

Also, this recognition by the U.S. government will make it easier for pastors to move between the United States and Canada. As a North American church, NALC pastors need to be able to move between the two countries.

NALC pastors from the United States have been permitted to move into Canada, but the reverse has not been possible until now.

In the one such case to date, members of a congregation in Pennsylvania have been waiting more than five months for the U.S. government to approve a visa for their newly-called pastor.

The Canada Section of the NALC has submitted documents to the Canadian government which will facilitate the legal relationship between the NALC and its congregations in Canada including the transfer of funds across the border.

Congregations in the U.S. which would like to be added to the group ruling should contact Anne Gleason in the NALC Administrative Office at nalc.mnoffice@thenalc.org or 888-551-7254.



Discussion between the speakers and with those attending is a feature of the Canadian Rockies Theological Conference.



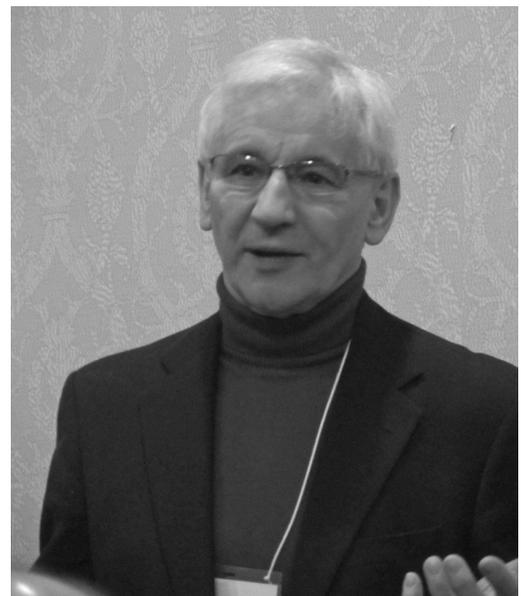
Dr. Uwe Siemon-Netto



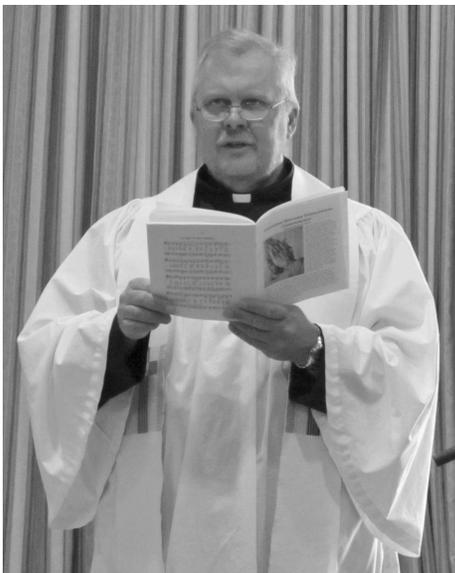
The conference is held in Canmore, Alberta, just outside of Banff National Park.

Canadian Rockies Theological Conference

May 5-8 - Canmore



Dr. Irving Hexham



Pastor Karl Johnsen of Calvary Lutheran Church in Edmonton, Alberta, led worship throughout the conference.



Pastor Edward Skutshek, president of the Canadian Association of Lutheran Churches, preached for the closing worship.



Pastor Donald Schiemann, president of the Alberta-British Columbia District of Lutheran Church-Canada, preached at the opening worship.

Look up - Live up - Grow up - Build up

Dear Followers of Jesus throughout
the North American Lutheran Church:

Christ is risen! Alleluia!

Look up — Live up — Grow up — Build up.

While I don't mean to take anything away from our joyous celebration of Christ's Resurrection, this year provides me with an opportunity to include an article about the Ascension of our Lord. I must confess I have often jumped into Pentecost before taking time to pause at this important celebration to reflect on its meaning and purpose in our life together.

There are three primary texts that describe Christ's Ascension. Two of the three appear in the appointed texts for the day. The first is most often associated with the Ascension, from Acts 1:1-11. Luke describes Jesus' time with His disciples following the Resurrection by appearing to them, offering them convincing proofs, and teaching them even more about the Kingdom of God. He commands them to stay until they have received the promised Holy Spirit and tells them they will be His witnesses in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, to the ends of the earth. As they watch, Jesus is lifted up, ascending into heaven. The disciples were immobilized as they gazed at the sky, longing for another glimpse. They might still be there were it not for the two angels who promised they would not miss His return.

The Gospel reading from Luke 24:44-53 begins with Jesus' declaration that He is the fulfillment of everything written in the Scriptures. Jesus opens the minds of His disciples so they might understand and be certain of the message they are called to proclaim. It was the same message that He came to proclaim: a message of repentance, forgiveness and faith in Jesus. He promised the powerful gift of the Holy Spirit, blessed them, and was lifted up into heaven. The disciples responded by worshiping Jesus, remaining obedient to Him, and being filled with great joy in Him.

The additional description is a brief word from the Gospel of Mark 16:19-20. "So then the Lord Jesus, after He had spoken to them, was taken up into



From the Bishop

Bishop John Bradosky

heaven and sat down at the right hand of God. And they went out and preached everywhere, while the Lord worked with them and confirmed the message by accompanying signs."

Beyond the historical event, the Ascension has continuing significance for us. Jesus is enthroned. As Paul writes in Ephesians 1:20, "God raised Christ from the dead and made him sit at His right hand in the heavenly places." Jesus is glorified over all other leaders, prophets and kings who came before Him. He is glorified over all angels and any other spiritual beings. He is the name above all other names in heaven and on earth. All authorities and powers are subject to the ascended Christ. It is also evidence of the Father's eternal affirmation that the sacrifice of Christ is finished, complete and fully accepted. The disciples were looking up and so must we look up to Christ and His exalted status, for He is our eternal hope and confidence.

The second thing I would point out in these texts is the obedience of the disciples in fulfilling His commands. He commands them to stay until they are clothed with power and they do. He sets their direction as His witnesses to the ends of the earth, and they are ready and willing to go. They are living out the mission as they worship. They are able to live with great joy in spite of dire circumstances, conflict and persecution. It is clear that they are not to spend their time gazing into heaven simply waiting for Christ's return. They are assured that they would not miss it and that they should get on with the mission. Mark describes the immediacy of their response. "They went out and preached everywhere." They did not go alone. His words remind us of Christ's promise in the Great

Continued on Page 10

Commission in Matthew 28, “I am with you always.” Mark adds, “While the Lord worked with them.”

As His followers, we are called to that same obedience — to be open to Christ’s work in us and with us. We follow Christ obediently, trusting that it is He who confirms His Gospel and that He provides the signs of its power and effect. This becomes the witness of Pentecost and the countless examples that follow in the book of Acts to our own day. The disciples were living up to the mission of Christ as they responded obediently to the One enthroned with all power and authority, and so must we who celebrate His Ascension.

Third, Jesus provided the disciples with even more information regarding His Kingdom. Jesus continues to teach them, expanding their wisdom and understanding. He is opening the Scripture, making clear the connections between the written Word of God and the living Word of God. Jesus makes it apparent that we cannot know the one without the other.

The content of the Gospel is critical to their mission. We can see both Law and Gospel in the proclamation that convicts the world of sin and offers the opportunity for repentance and the assurance of forgiveness and redemption through the completed work of Jesus on the Cross.

The Gospel of Jesus also proclaims a way forward in living out our salvation, by following Jesus as disciples and leading others to do the same. This is the content of the preaching and teaching, the purpose behind the healing and wholeness of life Jesus provides. What is most clear in these texts is that the Gospel is Jesus Christ — crucified, resurrected and ascended! Without knowing who Jesus is, we have no message to proclaim.

Reflecting on Psalm 110:1 — “Sit at my right hand” — Martin Luther writes:

He is not merely king of the heavens, the stars, and anything else the eye can see! This is something far higher and more important, for it means: “Sit next to Me on the exalted throne upon which I sit, and be My equal!” To sit next to Him — at His right hand, not at His feet — means to possess the very



The Ascension by Giotto di Bondone (1267-1337)

majesty and power that is called divine. Surely, by this one short word, Christ is raised from the earth and exalted above all the heavens, as St. Paul says, and becomes a King inconceivably glorious and of unspeakable power.

Hence, what we believe and teach concerning both the Person and the Kingdom of the Lord Christ has a powerful basis in this verse and strongly compels these conclusions. He is both true, natural man and true God. Of course, it is easy to believe that He is true man. If no more than this had been said of Christ, no one would have attacked or denied it. But the difficulty arises from the demand that people believe in Him as the true, eternal, almighty God, not merely as man. At this point all other faiths on earth separate from the Christian faith. For this article is beyond reason and human wisdom, and consequently it has always been attacked by clever and sophistic spirits.

Therefore this is the firm foundation, powerfully established: Because this Lord, Christ, the promised Son of David, sits at the right hand of God — God’s own throne, a place which no mere man, not even an angel, may occupy — it is not permissible to say or believe that Christ is merely a human being or some other creature (a term favored by the delusions of the Arians) inferior to God. It is strictly forbidden in the Scriptures to make

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any creature equal to God or to place another god alongside Him. But since here and in other places God Himself makes Christ equal to Himself by seating Him where only God may and can sit, it must be that Christ is of the same divine essence, of equal omnipotence, eternal power, and majesty.

This is our faith and teaching. But to reason and human wisdom, when men seek to rationalize this matter and depend on their brains to investigate and probe the subject, all this appears foolish and ridiculous. Indeed, it becomes offensive and blasphemous. Hence we see that a tremendous amount of heresy arose about this matter, even among Christians. People who depend upon their reason to judge the problem find that there is simply neither rhyme nor reason to such a paradoxical statement regarding Christ. They say: "What is this? A single person is both God and man, both Creator and creature! Has the Divine Majesty sunk so low that it travels in this miserable nature? How can He who sits above, Lord of all creation, become a poor man who must serve and be subject to everyone? You Christians yourselves say that there is only one God! How is it that you now have two gods? In fact, you make two beings out of Christ, so that one person is no longer one, but two — God and man!"

This superior cleverness of sophistic reason, which opposes this article, is very familiar and well understood among us, too, thank God, and it afflicts us as much as anyone else. However, among Christians the rule is not to argue or investigate, not to be a smart aleck or a rationalistic know-it-all; but to hear, believe, and persevere in the Word of God, through which alone we obtain whatever knowledge we have of God and divine things. We are not to determine out of ourselves what we must believe about Him, but to hear and learn it from Him. No one but He Himself knows Him as He is; no one can speak as accurately and eloquently of Him as He does Himself. For this reason it is fitting that we honor Him by conceding the truth of what He tells us, and refrain from any attempt to have our speculative reason make corrections in Him and in His Word. It is not for us to search out or to know how such a thing is possible; nor is it likely that we shall discover it in this life, until we come to the place where we shall no longer believe through a dark word but shall openly see the mystery (1 Corinthians 13:12).

Jesus called His followers to grow up in their faith, to be certain of the content of that faith by depending on the truth of the Word and not their own wisdom.

So too, we are called to grow up and mature in our faith so that we can be confident in our capacity to share it with others. The mission depends on our willingness to grow up in the One who makes Himself known even in His glorious Ascension.

Finally, as Jesus reached the end of His earthly ministry, we clearly see His purposes. He has invested Himself in the lives of His followers, the first disciples, so that they would be fully equipped to disciple others. At His Ascension we see His goal in preparing them to lead His Church. His purpose was to train those who are capable of building up the Body of Christ. He makes clear to them and to us that the goal is to make disciples who are capable of discipling others until the whole world comes to know Jesus, believe in Jesus, and become His followers. So too, we are called to this same ministry of building up the Body of Christ — making it even more effective for accomplishing His work and embodying His presence in our communities.

These four encouragements: *Look up, Live up, Grow up, Build up*, also parallel our four key values in the NALC.

We *look up* to Christ who is our Hope. We are Christ-Centered.

We *live up* to Christ's commands as obedient disciples. We are Mission-Driven.

We *grow up* in our faith in Christ according to His Word. We are Traditionally-Grounded.

We *build up* the Body of Christ equipping and nurturing His disciples. We are Congregationally-Focused.

May your celebration of Christ's Ascension be a time for such encouragement that renewed strength and commitment follows.

With you following Him,

Bishop John Bradosky

Abida – Hearts on Fire

2014 NALC Mission Festival

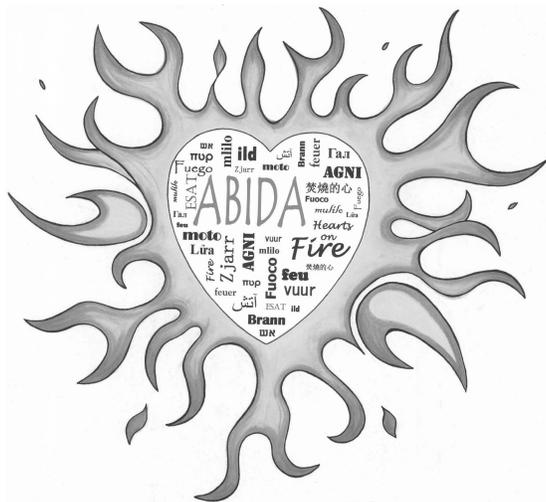
“Did not our hearts burn within us while He talked to us on the road, while He opened the Scriptures to us?” — Luke 24:32

Many of us fall into a post-Easter haze in the week following Easter, so thankful for the journey of Lent ending with such a victorious celebration. And then our lives go back to normal, to the usual.

Somehow we, just like the disciples, slip back into our lives as they were before. We have the best intentions of continuing some of the disciplines we had worked so hard on during Lent, to carry the joy forward in a passion-filled, life-altering way. We plan to share the Gospel with everyone with whom we come into contact and to really live a life more deeply in relationship with others. Then the urgent crowds out the important, and we find ourselves staring back at the empty tomb wondering what happened.

As Pastor Trina Petersen of A New Thing Christian Church in Lithonia, Ga., says, “It’s time for real talk. We are in an identity crisis in the American church. We need to be reminded of our identity in Christ as Kingdom citizens. To help move people from an understanding of membership to discipleship, from institution to intimacy, to activate and empower people.”

So often it is easy for us to bemoan our current situation and to look back on the “good old days” through rose-colored glasses — days we now believe were easier, when it felt like people were more receptive to the Gospel. It was culturally ingrained into society; people came to worship and church activities with regularity and finding volunteers was easy. It is easy to look at how other congregations, denominations, and countries do things and run back to the “upper room” saying, “I don’t have x, y, or z like they do, so I can’t do anything.” The resounding answer comes back, “So



what?” Far too often, we preach a Resurrection story that is too weak and empties the Cross of its power.

So it is with great joy, freedom, and a sense of deep wonder that we invite you to the NALC’s 2014 Mission Festival in Columbus, Ohio, Nov. 6-8. We are going to explore this very idea of “Abida: Hearts on Fire” to understand that we in the NALC are about changing the culture of what’s happening in the church.

We are in the midst of a movement, not just another program. The very core of this festival will be teaching from Bishop John Bradosky and the Rev. Dr. Gemechis Buba about the DNA of discipleship and what that looks like practically as it is lived out.

What makes this festival different from others? This festival clearly has an international flavor as we learn from our brothers and sisters around the world on the same topic. However, instead of just having inspiring teaching that never changes the way we live, the planning team is hard at work developing unique opportunities to put this teaching into practice.

The festival will be filled with real nuts-and-bolts resources, time to actually process what is being heard, panels filled with experienced pastors and lay people, and an opportunity to meet with mentors who can walk beside you because — just as we read in Luke’s Gospel — no one was ever sent out by themselves; they always went in pairs.

As we continue to wrestle with the varying cultures and contexts in which we find ourselves, our prayer is that hearts may continue to be set on fire as Jesus opens the Scripture to us in this journey down the Emmaus road and that He may be known in the breaking of the bread, where we taste sweet forgiveness.



Nestingens teach in China





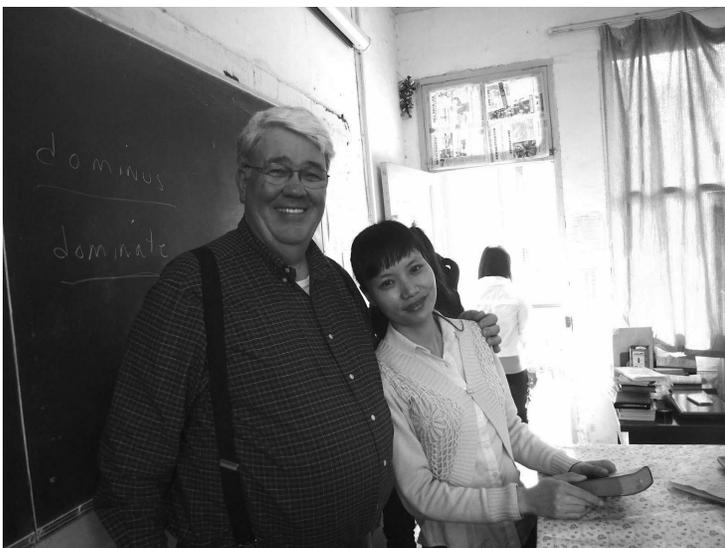
Jim and Carolyn Nestingen recently taught in China as a part of the NALC's Theologians Without Borders program. China Service Ventures partnered with the NALC to send the Nestingens to teach at the Protestant seminary in Wuhan, an industrial center of 10 million people on the Yangtze River in Hubei Province (next to Hunan Province).

These two provinces are where Lutherans started mission work more than 100 years ago, and they are among the poorest areas in China.

Jim, a retired professor from Luther Seminary, taught an intensive course on Luther's Small Catechism as a document for mission. Carolyn taught English.



Theologians Without Borders



The Christ-Centered Pastor in the NALC

Caring, Compassionate, the Character of Christ, Connected

As I have had the opportunity to be involved in the development of our new North American Lutheran Seminary, I've been challenged to consider what has served us well in Lutheran theological education in recent years and what may have been lacking. I've also had the chance to see evidence of the shortcomings of recent Lutheran theological education as I've worked with congregations and pastors.

Perhaps the greatest need and one which we are addressing as we discuss and develop the shape of our new NALS is termed, *Pastoral Formation*.

It seems Lutheran seminaries were well-focused on educating theologians and graduating professionals who would be ordained ministers, but were not doing well at forming pastors — servants who would minister to the flock in Christ's name and place. We are attempting to address the need for the forming of pastors for the NALC as we "build" the NALS. However, it would also serve us well to discuss this in the NALC as a whole.

If indeed theological education in recent years has produced "theologians" and "scholars" and "professional ministers," but not so much "pastors," perhaps we need to do some re-thinking and re-training and re-forming in the NALC, for the good of all involved. So, what does it mean to form a Lutheran pastor for the NALC?

Above all, I would cite the first of our four Core Values in the NALC: a pastor in the NALC is to be **Christ-Centered**.

In some ways, it's unfortunate that most of our NALC pastors today were "formed" in seminaries of another Lutheran body. Unfortunate, in that most of us were not taught to be Christ-Centered in the way that we understand it in the NALC. We are radically committed to the notion that Jesus Christ is "the way, the truth and the life; that no one comes to the Father but through" the Son (John 14:6).

Many Lutheran ministers today have centered their ministry on social causes and agendas. Many are



Ministry Matters

Pastor David Wendel

Assistant to the Bishop
for Ministry and Ecumenism

obsessed with proper liturgical practices and have centered their entire ministry on such. Many have built up a ministry that is centered on themselves, totally dependent upon their ability to work the crowd on Sunday morning like a talk-show host.

None of these "ministries," though, are what being a Christ-Centered pastor is about. A pastor in the NALC who is Christ-Centered will, first and foremost, be in Christ and abiding in His Word.

Our Lord speaks about this abiding in His farewell discourses, His teaching with the disciples on the night of his betrayal at the Last Supper (John 15). Jesus says,

Abide in me and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit by itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in me ... if you abide in me and my words abide in you, ask whatever you will and it shall be done for you. By this my Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit and so prove to be my disciples.

There is no way a pastor can be centered on Christ, unless one abides in Him. And we abide in Him when we in abide in His Word(s) regularly and faithfully, hearing the voice of the Good Shepherd — chewing on it, digesting it, and having it become part of one's very body and soul. Being in His Word brings forth fruit, and bearing good fruit glorifies the Father. And, when we glorify the Father, we are Jesus' disciples! This the Lord explained to His disciples in the Upper Room, and this He continues to share with us as we seek to be His disciples today.

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I would add that this is why we are committed to discipleship in the NALC today, beginning with our pastors! We want them to be disciples first, as followers of Jesus, deeply abiding in His Word. Everything a pastor is comes from the fact that he or she is first a disciple, abiding in Christ and His Word, bearing fruit that glorifies the Father.

In addition to being Christ-Centered, then, here is what follows for the Lutheran pastor who ministers under the authority of the Good Shepherd: the pastor **cares**, the pastor is **compassionate**; the pastor evidences **Christ's character**, the pastor is **connected**.

The pastor **cares**, not in the sense that the pastor ministers to the needs of the individual members of the flock, for that we might consider as compassion. Rather, pastoral care means *seelsorge*.

In *The Lutheran Pastor* (published in 1902) — a classic work that is still one of my favorites — Dr. G.H. Gerberding writes:

Seelsorge! What a beautiful and expressive term. We have nothing to correspond with it in English. It means the cure and care of souls. They need to be cured and cared for. This is what a pastor is for. He is a seelsorger. What an honor! What a privilege! What a responsibility! (Gerberding, page 372).

Another way of putting it is to say that the Lutheran pastor cares for the spiritual life of his flock in this world and the hope of eternal life to come. This means that everything the pastor does — in preaching, teaching, leadership, visitation, Baptism, administration of the Sacraments — is done for the sake of the care and nurturing of the soul, the spiritual life of the individual and the flock as a whole.

This, naturally, turns the focus away from self and toward the other. When the pastor visits the sick and dying, the pastor is not there to fulfill a commitment and to get out as quickly as possible. Rather, the pastor is to serve in Christ's stead to provide whatever care and cure are needed by this child of God.

Similarly, when the pastor is meeting with the congregational leadership, the pastor is not

concerned with whether he or she gets their way or is challenged by lay leaders. The primary concern is always with the soul and spiritual life of these children of God who have their own struggles and difficulties in life. Conflict and tension occur when the pastor loses sight of *seelsorge* in ministry, becoming focused instead on schedule, agenda, organization, institution, and self.

This presupposes, of course, a healthy, well-grounded, well-balanced person as pastor, able to focus on others and not constantly on one's own self, issues and concerns. The "coaching" ministry we are experiencing and developing in the NALC, as we work with The Navigators, will help us to form pastors who are truly healthy, well-grounded and well-balanced, and so capable of being faithful *seelsorgers!*

A Lutheran pastor is only capable of **compassion**, when the pastor is healthy, grounded and balanced.

To abide in Christ and His Word, as Jesus says, is to abide in love. He says further on in John 15, "As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you; abide in my love" (v. 9). Interestingly, he goes on to say, "If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love" (v. 10).

Webster's Dictionary defines compassion as: "a feeling of wanting to help someone who is sick, hungry, in trouble, etc.; sympathetic consciousness of others' distress together with a desire to alleviate it." We have compassion on others, caring for our neighbor in need, not out of some innate goodness, but because God first loved us (1 John 4). Our compassion for others is our response to the love of God the Father, manifested to us through the Son.

Again and again in the Gospels, we are told that Jesus had compassion on people He encountered. According to Matthew 9:15, He had compassion on them because they were like sheep without a shepherd. The Lutheran pastor ministers for the same reason — because we meet people who are like sheep without a shepherd and, in Christ's name, we wish to love, help and serve those in need. The Lutheran pastor does so, however, with the mind of Christ. I describe this aspect of the Lutheran pastor as having the **character of Christ**.

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Since I've been quoting from the dictionary, I will add the definition of *character*: "the mental and moral qualities distinctive to an individual; personality, nature, disposition, temperament, temper, mentality, makeup."

St. Paul writes in Philippians 4:7-9:

The peace of God, which passes all understanding, will keep your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. Finally, brethren, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is gracious, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things. What you have learned and received and heard and seen in me, do; and the God of peace will be with you.

Paul's desire is that every disciple and follower of the Lord be of one heart and mind — that of Jesus Christ. The apostle goes on to describe what the character of that disciple will look like — true, honorable, just, pure, lovely, gracious, excellent, and worthy of praise. This should be the Christ-like character of every Christian, but even more so of the Lutheran pastor.

In the lowering of the pastoral office to nothing more than a hired hand, one practical result has been that pastors often will act as employees — grumping and grumbling about this or that, gossiping, betraying confidences, acting no different than a back-room stock boy or a mediocre mid-level manager. The pastoral office deserves better than that!

NALC pastors should manifest the character of Christ in heart and mind! Their Christ-like character should earn them the respect of their congregation and lay leadership, and raise the understanding of the Office of Ministry in the Body of Christ as a whole. Again, how can the Lutheran pastor have a Christ-like character without abiding in His Word, learning from the feet of the Teacher what is His personality, nature and temperament — the character that we wish to have as His servant?

Finally, the Lutheran pastor is one who is **connected** to the flock — as a whole and as individuals. There are many places in Scripture where we are reminded that the Body of Christ is a

community of disciples. As quoted above, Jesus speaks of Himself as the vine and us as the branches — all interconnected with Him and with each other.

St. Paul speaks at length about the Church as a body — different parts yet all connected and essential to proper functioning. That being said, the greatest example of God's desire and intention that we all be connected is the fact that God in Himself is a community of "persons" — Father, Son and Holy Spirit. The persons of the Godhead are different and distinct, yet one.

It might seem unnecessary to say that the Lutheran pastor is to be connected. Yet, our world today pushes people to be isolated and "doing their own thing," — radically independent and disconnected from others. Husbands are isolated from wives with little communication or emotional connection. Parents and children have meals in front of the TV or in their rooms. A group of young adults sits at a table in a restaurant, each engrossed in her or her own smart phone, with little conversation or connection, other than proximity.

Our surrounding culture has also impacted congregations and pastors. When I was first ordained, I knew that I could drop by most any parishioner's home and be welcomed unannounced. After 30 years in the parish, I knew that I should call before visiting, and that folks often were not open to an in-home visit. In many places today, pastors do not make home visits, are not involved fully in the lives of their parishioners, and often are seen as somewhat distant and disconnected. Some pastors are most comfortable sitting in their offices or homes, rather than attending congregational studies, gatherings and events.

It may sound strange to many, but it is not unusual for pastors today to be isolated, to feel (and prefer to be) alone — not connected to their congregation in such a way that there is open, honest and transparent communication among pastor, lay leaders, and the congregation as a whole.

It must be said, as well, that such isolation and disconnectedness can be the result of depression, despair and unhealthiness on the part of the pastor.

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Such issues separate the pastor from family and congregation, sending them into a downward spiral that often ends in tension, turmoil and the tendering of a resignation.

The faithful Lutheran pastor is to be closely connected to the congregation and all its members, and will want to do everything possible to create and sustain healthy relationships — even when it means seeking counseling and professional help. More than that, however, should be the desire to continue to abide in Christ and His Word, being connected with the Lord, and so with the others holding on to the vine. As a bishop used to say, “when you’re swinging through the jungle, hold on to the vine!”

The reason that the Lutheran pastor is connected to the congregation is to develop healthy and lasting relationships, built on trust and goodwill. When the pastor is disconnected, it is difficult, if not impossible, to win the confidence and love of the people being served.

Until the pastor gains the trust of the parishioners, little will be accomplished. This is why the old

maxim remains true that when a pastor is called to a new congregation, the first year should be invested in visiting with members, getting to know them, and making no significant changes. In this first year, the pastor and congregation become connected, develop trusting relationships, and learn how to work together in a spirit of good-natured cooperation for the good of all. Based on those relationships, a fruitful ministry will follow. A pastor who is disconnected from the congregation will find little good fruit is produced and little glory given to the Father.

I pray that you have now joined me in considering the importance of “pastoral formation” and what being a Lutheran pastor in the NALC means, not only for our new North American Lutheran Seminary students, but also for existing pastors and congregations. It might serve you well to discuss “pastoral formation” in church council meetings with your pastor, in adult classes on Sunday morning, or in other venues where pastor and people may benefit from such reflection.

If I have stimulated thinking and conversation on pastoral formation and ministry within the NALC, then I have achieved my goal for this issue of *Ministry Matters!*

DVD study on Lutheran teaching featuring Jim Nestingen is available

A DVD study led by the Rev. Dr. James Nestingen, a popular Lutheran theologian, is now available from the NALC offices.

This 12-part DVD on Lutheran theology as explained in the Lutheran Confessions and Martin Luther’s Small Catechism is an excellent resource for adult studies.

The DVD series, with individual sessions of 35-60 minutes each, was produced by St. Paul Lutheran Seminary and funded, in part, by a grant from the North American Lutheran Church.

Dr. Nestingen, an NALC pastor, taught church history and the Lutheran Confessions at Luther Seminary in St. Paul, Minn., for many years.

The session titles are:

1. The Lutheran Confessions
2. Justification
3. Law and Gospel
4. Ten Words
5. God the Father
6. Who is Jesus?
7. Redeemed
8. Holy Spirit
9. Lord's Prayer
10. Baptism
11. Confession and Absolution
12. Communion



James Nestingen

The DVDs may be ordered by contacting the NALC Administrative Office at nalc.mnoffice@thenalc.org or 888-551-7254. The set is \$100 (plus postage).

Reviewing your worship practices

In the congregation I serve — Our Savior’s Lutheran Church in Salem, Ore. — our ministry team is currently evaluating our worship services to determine how we can improve the quality of our worship celebrations.

I am aware that an individual’s worship “experience” is determined, ultimately, by the presence and movement of the Holy Spirit. On the other hand, I am also aware of the countless ways that worship leaders (including preachers) can distract those in attendance from their focus on the act of worship.

I have written in the past on the subject of worship planning and content. But this month’s column is inspired by a personal conviction that most pastors — and that includes me — do not invest enough time, energy and creativity in worship planning. I’m not speaking so much of sermon preparation — something I believe most pastors take very seriously. I’m talking about the *other* elements in our services.

Some suggestions and ideas for your consideration:

Most congregations do not utilize the creative gifts of a significant number of their members when it comes to worship content and leadership. Too often it comes down to the pastor, a few musicians and perhaps a lay reader. Otherwise, everyone else in attendance fills the role of those who observe *others* leading them in worship.

Granted, we expect our people to participate in congregational singing. But even here we often discourage singing by choosing unfamiliar and/or overly-complex songs and hymns. There is the Lord’s Supper, of course, where we, at least, expect our people to get up and come forward.

Nevertheless, too many of our people see their role in worship as essentially *passive* rather than *active*.

A simple, long-term strategy for addressing this is to *find ways to utilize the gifts of an increasing number of members when it comes to the actual content of your services*. This principle can apply to almost every element of worship, including the



In Pursuit of the Great Commission

Pastor Don Brandt

sermon. Without having to give up the pulpit, there are ways to even involve lay people in the sermon message. For example, a dialogue sermon involving one or more members, or interviewing a member or guest as part of the message. Or what about having members share their personal faith stories?

Apart from the sermon, what about additional volunteers for music, or drama, or hospitality?

Another suggestion pertains to your selection of songs and hymns. Err on the side of familiarity and popularity. When you do introduce an unfamiliar composition do so with care and strong vocal support. While it is true that compositions can, over time, “wear thin,” your trained musicians tend to reach this point long before most worshipers. And the single best gauge of a composition’s popularity is how well (and with how much volume) your members sing that song.

Find ways to preview your worship and sermon themes each week. Send out a congregational email (keep it short) describing what will be happening at your upcoming worship celebration.

Related to the “preview” suggestion, too many pastors fail to tie their services together thematically. (This is certainly true in my case.) In addition to the connection between the lessons and the sermon, there can be related worship-theme elements such as a particular song (either as a congregational song or a performed anthem), an appropriate drama skit, children’s message, video clip, etc.

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Related to sermons and worship themes, generate congregational interest ahead of time with brief surveys pertaining to the sermon topic. Ask for their opinions and then share some of them as part of the sermon message. You can do these surveys the previous Sunday or by email.

Do all you can to have competent, enthusiastic musicians leading your worship liturgy, songs and hymns. If this requires additional funding, plan on building this into your next annual budget. What percentage of your current ministry budget is going to this? You might be surprised how little you spend on worship; especially when compared to other areas of ministry that do not impact nearly as many people as your worship celebrations do.

Find additional opportunities to involve children and youth in leading a portion of your service; e.g., as singers, readers, in skits, etc.

Can you incorporate short video clips into some of your services?

How about an annual survey of your members regarding their views on your worship ministry? You could start with, “What do you think we are doing well in our worship ministry?” “What could we be doing better?” “Name three hymns/songs you would like to sing more often.” “What would you like to sing less often?”

Also, consider recruiting a prayer team that will lift up your worship celebration in prayer, each Sunday, just before your service begins. And also encourage all who help lead your services to join together in prayer prior to the beginning of your worship hour.

Some of the above suggestions might seem unrealistic if you are part of a very small worshipping community. So let me conclude with ideas and considerations for worship gatherings of less than 50 people.

Congregational singing: The smaller your group the more familiar and easier your songs/hymns need to be. Don't select songs that you would need at least 75 or 100 participants to sing with confidence. Also,

the smaller your worshipping community the less congregational singing, overall, you should plan on. Singing can be exhausting; especially with fewer than 25 in attendance. And your worshipers are far more self-conscious about their voices — and less likely to sing — in smaller groups.

Liturgical Music: Small worshipping groups should have more spoken liturgical elements and less liturgical music. This will make your service far more participatory for your occasional visitors for some of the same reasons mentioned above.

Use of video: Smaller groups can make excellent use of video resources. This is especially true with DVDs. All you need, for everyone to be able to see, is a DVD player and large flat screen television set. One DVD movie option is *The Gospel of John*. It uses John's Gospel word-for-word in its narration and dialogue. Excellent scenes can even be used from this film to serve as your Scripture reading. Pastor Tom Hux, my co-pastor, was up to preach this last Easter. He used two scenes from this movie for Easter Gospel readings. As a matter of fact, video is often *more* complicated in a large sanctuary than it needs to be in a small worship space. I also recommend scenes from Zeffirelli's *Jesus of Nazareth*. In addition, there are numerous Christian instructional (adult ed) videos available. I enjoy video courses by John Ortberg and Lee Stroebel. Their teaching lessons are typically 10 minutes in length. Perhaps you can connect your television to a laptop to watch YouTube videos. And if you have a decent sound system there are many YouTube Christian music videos available.

Preaching: Preaching to very small groups should often incorporate discussion as a part of the sermon message. In fact, when this is done you will find worshipers far more engaged than they would be in larger worship settings. Monologue sermons strike me as somewhat unnatural and inappropriate in groups of less than 20 to 25. Note: You want to use some caution in the kind of “feedback” you are soliciting during worship. You don't want to give certain individuals the opportunity to make inappropriate comments that create awkwardness or embarrassment for the rest of your group. Smaller worshipping groups are also good settings for recruiting individuals to share their faith stories during worship.