NALC News

North American Lutheran Church June 2015

‘Our Tree is Your Tree’

The Luthergarten: ‘Is there an NALC tree?’

By Pastor David Wendel

“Even if I knew that the world were to collapse tomorrow, I would still plant my apple tree today.”

— Ascribed to Martin Luther

One of the blessings of the recent International Conference on Confessional Leadership in the 21st Century was the chance for participants to see the changes to Luther’s city — Wittenberg, Germany — in preparation for the 500th anniversary of the Reformation in 2017. As Dr. Martin Luther nailed the 95 Theses on the door of the Castle Church in Wittenberg on Oct. 31, 1517, that day in 2017 will mark 500 years of Reformation history!

In 2017, many churches, Lutheran and others, will commemorate the anniversary that had its beginnings in Lutherstadt Wittenberg. Currently, the famous Castle Church, St. Mary’s (the Town Church), Luther house and other locations in Wittenberg (and around Germany) are under construction and refurbishment in preparation for the celebrations to come.

A beautiful new project to commemorate the anniversary jubilee is the *Luthergarten* (Luther garden) established in Wittenberg on the grounds of the former town fortifications. In connection with this project, 500 trees will be planted in the *Luthergarten* and elsewhere in the town, giving a concrete sign of the optimism so clearly expressed in Luther's apple tree quote.

Continued on Page 2

Pastor David Wendel, President Wakseyoum Idosa of the Ethiopian Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus, Professor James Nestingen, and EECMY Central Synod President Abraham Mengesha pose at the EECMY’s tree in the Luthergarten in Wittenberg, Germany.

Continued from Page 1

Churches from all over the world and from all confessions are being invited to sponsor one of the 500 trees to be planted in Wittenberg, and at the same time to plant a corresponding tree in a place that is significant for their own church.

The project has been initiated by the Lutheran World Federation, with support from the German National Committee of the LWF and the United Evangelical Lutheran Church of Germany and in cooperation with Lutherstadt Wittenberg.

The Luthergarten in Wittenberg, Germany, with the Castle Church in the background. Five hundred trees will be planted in Wittenberg to celebrate the 500th anniversary of the Reformation.

During the May 3-8 International Conference on Confessional Leadership in the 21st Century, a walking tour of Wittenberg was sponsored for the participants from Lutheran churches around the world. A highlight of the tour was a stop at the *Luthergarten,* where church representatives could find and view the tree donated and planted by their particular church body.

Walking together on this tour were President Wakseyoum Idosa of the Ethiopian Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus — the only Full Communion partner church of the NALC — Pastor David Wendel, NALC Assistant to the Bishop, and Professor Jim Nestingen, a retired NALC pastor, teacher and speaker at the conference.

President Idosa asked Wendel and Nestingen if the NALC had a tree, to which they replied, “No, as a young church body, we as yet have no tree in the *Luthergarten.”* President Idosa then took the two NALC representatives, together with EECMY Central Synod President Abraham Mengesha, to their tree. “Here,” said President Idosa. “Here is the NALC tree. Our tree is your tree!” His words are a wonderful testimony to the collegial and fraternal relationship that exists between the EECMY and the NALC.

You can learn more about the *Luthergarten* at http://luthergarten.de/welcome.html.

Annual Gathering for NALC women

The Women of the NALC Annual Gathering will take place Aug. 11-12 under the theme, “A Gathering of Witnesses.” The women will meet 2 p.m. to 7 p.m. Tuesday and 7:30 a.m. to 1 p.m. Wednesday.

Tuesday evening’s theme is “A Gathering of Witnesses: Secure in Christ’s Love, Christians Tried and True.” Several speakers will share accounts of Christians in various parts of the world and their faith under persecution.

Wednesday morning’s theme is “A Gathering of Witnesses: Commissioned by the Lord, Laborers in the Harvest.” Keynote speaker will be NALC Bishop John Bradosky.

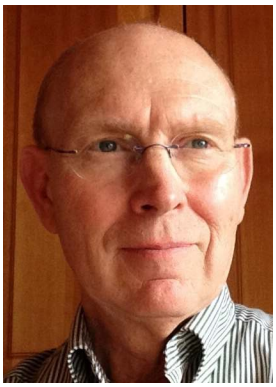
Those at the Annual Gathering will also elect five members of The Women’s Council.

Tuesday dinner and Wednesday breakfast and lunch are included in the $75 registration fee. You may register for the Women’s Gathering and other Lutheran week events at www.thenalc.org.

Nominations for Executive Council

Four pastors and four lay people have been nominated to serve on the NALC Executive Council.

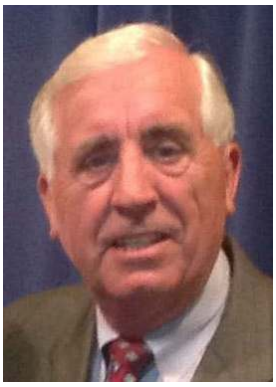
The 2015 NALC Convocation will elect three members of the NALC Executive Council (two lay people and one pastor).



John Elling

Rosemary Johnson

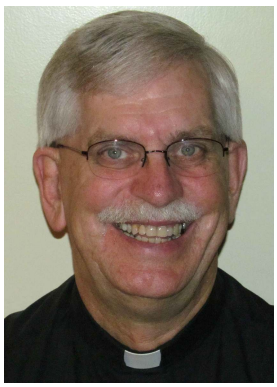
Stephen Lord



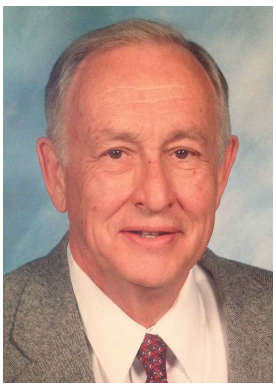
Brian Sutton

Rosemary Johnson of Hope Lutheran Church in Ladysmith, Wis., and Stephen Lord of Black Forest Lutheran Church in Colorado Springs, Colo., are nominated for a four-year term on the Executive Council.

Tom Hux



Carl Rasmussen



Paul Reiff

Eric Waters

John Elling and Brian Sutton are nominated for a two-year term on the Executive Council. They will fill the unexpired term of Matthew Burkhart of Upper Arlington Lutheran Church in Columbus, Ohio, who has resigned his position.

Four pastors are nominated for a four-year term designated for ordained ministers:

+ Pastor Tom Hux of Our Savior's Lutheran Church in Salem, Ore.

+ Pastor Carl Rasmussen of First Lutheran Church in Kirkland, Ill.

+ Pastor Paul Reiff of Faith Lutheran Church in Sturgeon Lake, Minn.

+ Pastor Eric Waters of Upper Arlington Lutheran Church in Columbus, Ohio.

The 2015 Convocation will also elect the bishop and two members of the Court of Adjudication.

Bishop John Bradosky is currently the only candidate for bishop.

Carolyn Nestingen of Roseville, Minn., and Pastor Marty Ramey of Dallas, N.C., are nominated for the Court of Adjudication.

Biographical information on the nominees is available online at thenalc.org/2015-convocation.

Additional nominations are still possible for all positions.

Nominations for Bishop may be made by any Convocation delegate or by NALC congregations or the NALC Executive Council until the first ballot takes place at the Convocation.

For Executive Council and Court of Adjudication, three or more delegates representing at least three congregations may together submit additional nominations. Such nominations must be submitted by June 28 (45 days before the Convocation).

NALC Convocation is Aug. 12-14

Martyrdom and faithful witness will provide a common theme for the 2015 NALC Convocation and the theological conference and women's gathering that precede it.

The "Lutheran Week" events will be held Aug. 11-14 at the Hyatt Regency Hotel in the Dallas-Fort Worth International Airport.

"Martyr: Life-giving Witness" is the theme for the 2015 NALC Convocation Aug. 12-14.

The Convocation will focus on the reality of Christians suffering for the sake of Jesus and the Gospel today, and the fact that this testimony serves as a "life-giving witness," causing others to have their eyes opened, turning from darkness to light and from the power of Satan to God.

The Convocation will begin at 1:30 p.m. Wednesday, Aug. 12, with special Mission Intensive sessions including speakers to highlight the NALC's commitment to its Mission-Driven core value and to equip congregations for mission.

Mission Districts will meet on Wednesday evening as a part of the Mission-Driven focus.

Convocation business sessions on Aug. 13-14 will include speakers on the theme as well as church business including voting on proposed constitutional amendments and election of bishop and members of the Executive Council and Court of Adjudication. There will also be reports and updates about the life and ministry of the NALC and the North American Lutheran Seminary, as well as displays featuring NALC missions and ministries. Workshops on a variety of topics will be offered on Friday.

The Hyatt Regency Dallas-Fort Worth Airport will host the 2015 NALC Convocation Aug. 12-14.

MARTYR
LIFE-GIVING WITNESS
ACTS 26:16-18

The Convocation is expected to conclude by 5 p.m. Friday.

The $225 Convocation registration fee includes six meals: dinner on Wednesday and Thursday; and breakfast and lunch on Thursday and Friday.

The Women of the NALC Annual Gathering will take place Aug. 11-12 under the theme, "A Gathering of Witnesses." The women will meet 2 p.m. to 7 p.m. Tuesday and 7:30 a.m. to 1 p.m. Wednesday. Tuesday dinner and Wednesday breakfast and lunch are included in the $75 registration fee.

"Martyrdom and the Sufferings of the Righteous" is the theme for the Carl E. Braaten and Robert D. Benne Lectures in Theology Aug. 11-12. The theological conference begins at 1 p.m. Tuesday and concludes with lunch on Wednesday. Tuesday dinner and Wednesday breakfast and lunch are included in the $150 registration fee.

A special room rate has been negotiated at the hotel. The rate is good for reservations made by July 21. Reservations may be made through a link on the NALC website or by calling 888-421-1442.

You may register online for the Convocation and other Lutheran week events at www.thenalc.org.

‘Martyrdom and the Suffering of the Righteous’ is theme of lectures

“Martyrdom and the Sufferings of the Righteous” is the theme for the Carl E. Braaten and Robert D. Benne Lectures in Theology Aug. 11-12 at the Hyatt Regency in the Dallas-Fort Worth International Airport. The annual theological conference is held prior to the NALC Convocation.

Speakers for the conference and their topics include:

+ “A Martyr for What Cause? Reconsidering ‘Bonhoeffer and the Jews’” - Dr. Michael DeJonge, Associate Professor in Religious Studies at the University of Southern Florida, earned his Ph.D. in Religion from Emory University. He is the author of *Bonhoeffer’s Theological Formation: Berlin, Barth, and Protestant Theology* and co-editor of *The Bonhoeffer Reader*.

+ The Persecution of the Christians in Ethiopia - Lensa Gudina, Managing Director of the Gudina Tumsa Foundation in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. She is the daughter of the martyred Rev. Gudina Tumsa.

+ The Great Divide: Muslim and Christian Notions on Martyrdom - Raymond Ibrahim, a widely published author, public speaker, and Middle East and Islam specialist. His books include *Crucified Again: Exposing Islam’s New War on Christians* and *The Al Qaeda Reader.*

+ “Theology of the Martyrs” - Dr. Paul R. Hinlicky, Tise Professor of Lutheran Studies at Roanoke College, holds a Ph.D. from Union Theological Seminary. The author of more than seventy articles and many books, he taught theology for six years at Jan Comenius University in Bratislava, Slovakia. He is the former editor of *Lutheran Forum* and *Pro Ecclesia* theological journals.

Michael DeJonge

Lensa Gudina

Paul Hinlicky

Raymond Ibrahim

Judy Stack-Nelson

Hans Wiersma

+ Martydom and the New Testament - Dr. Judy Stack-Nelson holds a Ph.D. in New Testament from Princeton Theological Seminary. She has taught at a number of colleges in Minnesota including St. Olaf College and Augsburg College and has also taught online courses for those preparing for ministry through St. Paul Lutheran Seminary and Fuller Seminary.

+ The Martyrs of the Reformation - Dr. Hans Wiersma, associate professor of religion at Augsburg College. He is a graduate of the University of California and has M.Div. and Ph.D. degrees from Luther Seminary.

The theological conference begins at 1 p.m. Tuesday and concludes with lunch on Wednesday. Tuesday dinner and Wednesday breakfast and lunch are included in the $150 registration fee.

For more information or to register go to www.thenalc.org.

Gordon-Conwell Seminary honors Bishop Bradosky with doctorate

Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary, Charlotte, N.C., presented NALC Bishop John Bradosky with an honorary Doctor of Ministry degree at its May 16 commencement.

Bishop Bradosky was the speaker for their May 15 baccalaureate service.

Gordon Conwell hosts a North American Lutheran Seminary House of Studies.

President Dennis Hollinger's words at awarding of Doctor of Ministry to Bishop John F. Bradosky:

"At a time when mainline Lutheranism has been sliding into antinomianism and Biblical relativism, Bishop John Bradosky has been a relentless and courageous leader on behalf of orthodox Christianity. His life and ministry have all been motivated by obedience to our Lord's Great Commission as he has studied, taught, and lived a life of obedient discipleship.

"As the first elected Bishop of the North American Lutheran Church, he leads nearly 400 congregations throughout the United States, Canada and the Caribbean. Bishop Bradosky's unique blend of compassionate visionary leadership has resulted in the NALC becoming a worldwide voice for orthodoxy in Christ's church.

President Dennis Hollinger, left, and Dean Tim Laniak of Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary, Charlotte, N.C., present Bishop John Bradosky with an honorary Doctor of Ministry degree.

"Under his leadership, direction and support, the partnership between Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary and the North American Lutheran Church, which we know as the Lutheran House of Studies, is becoming a strong partner in orthodox theological education.

"Bishop Bradosky has always assumed a leading role in nurturing ecumenical relationships within the church, being an active participant in ecumenical programs both in the U.S. and throughout the world. All of this is, however, because he is a man immersed in God's Holy Word, a man of prayer and action, a man who deeply loves, knows and seeks to serve his Lord."

NALC Bishop John Bradosky speaks at the Baccalaureate service at Gordon Conwell Theological Seminary on May 15.

Honorary Doctorate

Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary, Charlotte, N.C., presented NALC Bishop John Bradosky with an honorary Doctor of Ministry degree at its May 16 commencement. Here is the text of the citation:

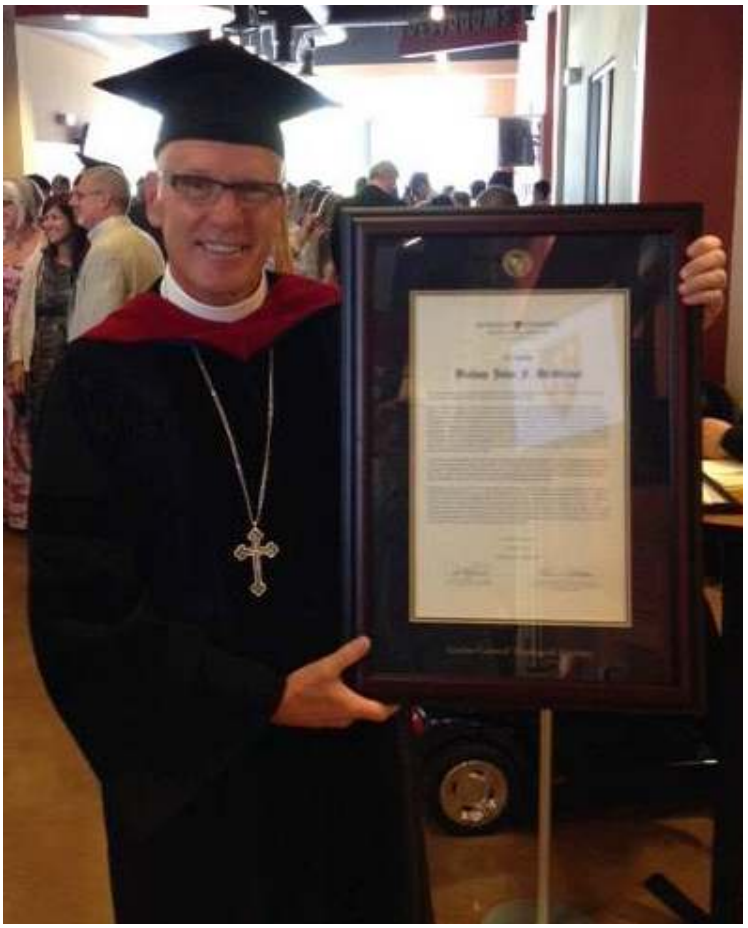
We are pleased to honor today Bishop John F. Bradosky, champion for those in need, humble servant of the Church and a faithful witness to the power and goodness of God.

In 2011 John Bradosky was elected Bishop of the newly-formed North American Lutheran Church (NALC) after serving for nearly a year as its General Secretary. He came to this position with 32 years of service in parish ministry, having served in diverse urban, suburban and multicultural settings. He is remembered with fondness at Grace Lutheran Church in Huntington Beach, California, "for his compassion for the hurting and the lost" and brings a commitment as Bishop to maintain "a ministry of visitation throughout the church, (be a) defender of the faith, and promote the mission of the church."

His reliance on the Holy Spirit is evidenced by this statement at his Installation Ceremony: "I cannot fulfill this office by anything within me. My wisdom and experience are completely insufficient. I can only fulfill this office through the work of the Holy Spirit, the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the promise of your faithful prayers and support." This is a testament to his deep and abiding love for Jesus Christ.

As Bishop, John Bradosky powerfully addressed the grief and loss that pastors and congregations have experienced, reflecting on the tragic death of his six-year-old son in a car accident. "I understand that grief. It has been a constant companion since the death of our son. In many ways our capacity for compassion is equal to the size of our grief." This compassion and understanding have been a hallmark of his life as a leader and allows him to minister to and be a model for the churches and leaders that he serves.

Bishop Bradosky earned a B.A. in Philosophy (in the Honors Track) with a minor in Psychology from



Bishop Bradosky poses with the honorary doctorate citation presented at the graduation of Gordon Conwell Theological Seminary in Charlotte, N.C.

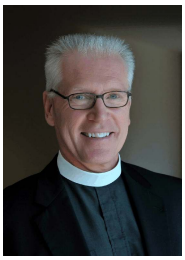
Indiana University of Pennsylvania and received a Master of Divinity degree from Wittenberg University—Hamma School of Theology in Springfield, Ohio.

He and his wife, Kristi, whom he married in 1976, have four children, three of whom are living, and two wonderful grandchildren.

In honor of his lifetime of service to the Church at large and to his committed leadership in the North American Lutheran Church especially, with thanksgiving for his faithful work with pastors and other Christian leaders, and with reverence for his tireless efforts for the advancement of God's Kingdom, and on the recommendation of the Board of Trustees, we honor ourselves this 16th day of May 2015 by presenting for this degree

Doctor of Ministry
Honoris causa
Bishop John F. Bradosky

What's in a Name



From the Bishop

Bishop John Bradosky

Dear followers of Jesus in the North American Lutheran Church:

In celebration of the Holy Trinity I am sharing a part of my message delivered to the Carolinas Mission District Convocation. (Please take a moment to read John 3:1-17.)

I am always fascinated by the way parents pick names for their children. Our daughter and son-in-law named our first grandchild "Ramsay." It has no connection to either family, and I believe they watch cooking shows and had some fondness for Chef Ramsay. But the other day I looked up the meaning of his name and discovered it comes from an Old English word for "wild garlic island." Such profound insignificance caused me to look a little more deeply for the meaning of our second grandson who they named "Brody." I learned that it comes from a Gaelic word meaning "ditch."

You can tell we live in a world where how it sounds is more important than what it means. This is not a concern I will raise in the course of our family discussions, nor am I overly concerned that they will be ridiculed because of their names. They are both going to be big boys! I will probably be the only one who will take the time to research the origin and meaning of their names.

We live in a world where not many want to dig deeply. We are often satisfied to live our lives only scratching the surface of meaning and purpose when God invites us to go so much deeper.

In John 3, Jesus was inviting Nicodemus to go deeper.

I learned a lot about names and their meaning when I studied in the Holy Land. It was while we were there that Kristi and I picked the names for our children. One of the most important things I learned was that people in Semitic cultures do not give out their names as freely as we do. We introduce ourselves with our name. In Semitic cultures they want to get to know you before they give you their name. They believe your name is deeply connected with your identity, so if you give a person your name you have given them your identity. To know a person's name is to be connected to them, to be in a relationship with them. It is an act of intimacy to call a person by name.

On Trinity Sunday we celebrate the name of God and the nature of God. Trinity is neither a theological concept, nor a philosophy principle. It is the essential nature of God. We worship a God who has revealed Himself as Father, Son and Holy Spirit. We worship a God who has entered history, entered our humanity, and offers us His continuous and powerful presence to the end of time. This God has demonstrated His nature as Father, Son and Holy Spirit, in creation, redemption and sanctification. This same Lord created us, redeems us and makes us holy.

The name of God is revealed to Abraham and proclaimed to Moses. Israel is warned against profaning the name of the Lord or taking it in vain. Priests were to minister in the name of the Lord and to call on the name of the Lord was an act of worship. When you refer to the name of the Lord you are referring to God's entire character and person. In fact, His name is so holy it cannot be pronounced. When you watch Hassidic Jews read the Scriptures you can see them bow in reverence and instead of saying His name they say, "the Lord" or *"Elohim*" (God's job description — what He does.)

In the New Testament we find a similar understanding in reference to the name of Jesus. Salvation is through His name, believers are to gather in His name, we are to pray in His name.

Continued on Page 9

Continued from Page 8

Worship, service and suffering are offered in the name of Jesus. Martyrs die while naming the name of Jesus Christ. It is at the name of Jesus that every knee will one day bow and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father.

From the Father and the Son, the Holy Spirit comes with power to comfort, guide and strengthen the entire Body of Christ, the Church — all who believe in Christ Jesus for the sake of fulfilling His mission and ministry — until He returns in power and glory.

To call upon the revealed name of the Holy God is to acknowledge His presence, to remember that He has called us into a life-giving relationship with Him through faith in Jesus Christ and through the work of the Holy Spirit. To contemplate the meaning and implication of the invocation alone is a profound act of worship that could keep us occupied eternally. We keep waiting for the pastor to say something profound about our life and our faith. What is more profound than the name of God, the nature of God and being in the presence of God?

When church bodies, institutions or any other group take the name of the living God and conscript it for any other purpose or agenda, they commit heresy, transgress the commandments, pervert the doctrine of the Trinity and engage in blasphemy. To attempt to rename God with words that better fit our agendas or issues is nothing short of open rebellion against God. It is to reject revelation in favor of our own perverse insight.

During my first meeting with General Secretary Berhanu of the Ethiopian Evangelical Lutheran Church Mekane Yesus, I was questioned continuously for 20 minutes about what I believed. When I said, “Berhanu, I feel like I am being interrogated.” He said, “You are!” “Why all the questions?” I asked. He said, “Our prior experience has taught us that just when we thought we were on the same page we discovered we were really worlds apart.”

He told me the story of a Lutheran professor from the United States who came to teach a course of the Gospels at the seminary. When approaching the first miracle story of Jesus’ changing water into

wine at the marriage feast in Cana, he told the students that his wife was a professor of chemistry who assured him that it is chemically impossible for water to become wine. He further told the students that miracle stories were added later in order to convince people of Jesus’ divine nature.

The students were shocked and asked for clarification. The professor repeated his teaching and, one by one, the students closed their books and walked out of the class. The professor protested their action to no avail. He said, “This is the new method for studying the Scriptures,” and that they needed to be open to learn.

A few minutes later the president of the seminary entered the classroom and asked the professor if what the students reported was true. The professor repeated his teaching and perspective.

Without hesitation the president said, “You must leave now!” When asked, “Why?” the president said the professor had perverted the doctrine of the Trinity. The professor protested that he wasn’t

Continued on Page 10

Continued from Page 9

teaching about the Trinity but about miracles and the impossibility of changing water into wine.

The president asked the professor if he believed that the Father and the Son are one? "If you believe they are one, do you also believe the Son has the same power that the Father has? If the Father has the power to create water and all the chemical reactions in producing wine, then the Son has the same creative power to do with water and all the other chemicals what He wills! There is no question in our minds that the Son can do what the Father did in creation. There is no doubt that He can turn water into wine."

"One more thing," said the president, "we would rather graduate pastors who enter the world looking for the miracles of God rather than send out those who live in the midst of God's miracles denying their existence."

The nature of God — Father, Son and Holy Spirit — are intimately connected. You can't tamper with the identity of one and not affect the other two. It is for this reason that the Scriptures norm our life and faith — not human wisdom. Those Scriptures are the authoritative norm for all matters of life and faith. All doctrines and actions are judged by that Word.

We have been entrusted with the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Nothing is more urgent in our day than a Church that believes the Gospel and makes it the fundamental starting point and directing power for its life. This Church must stand firm in its assertion that the Gospel is true — universally true — for everyone in all parts of the world in every point in history.

The NALC must stand over and against the rampant relativism espoused by those who claim to be the Church, yet reject the Gospel in favor of the cheap manmade substitutes of universalism, arbitrary acceptance, and inclusivity.

The very thought that we could redesign and improve God's grace in favor of our own version of what it means to be gracious is apostasy. The grace of Jesus Christ, His life-giving love and salvation through His atoning sacrifice and death on the cross is the only and all-sufficient grace of the Church — the only saving grace and the only Gospel we proclaim.

Then if that Gospel is true, if it tells us where all of history is headed, then mission must follow! If the Gospel is true, then the story must be made known. Jesus didn't write a book, but He left behind a community that would make known the Gospel — the Good News of the Kingdom of God — by embodying that Gospel in its life and in its deeds and announcing it in its words. Jesus left behind a community of His disciples.

He charged His disciples, His Church, with the mission we have before us: "Go and make disciples of all nations!" This time between His first coming and His second coming is the time for the witness of His Church. Mission is not optional but an essential part of redemptive history. The Gospel is true and must be shared universally. This is the nature of making disciples: to lead others to faith in Jesus, to teach the one holy catholic and apostolic faith, to live the faith in our various vocations and to equip all the faithful to pass on this faith and guide others in living the faith. When those we teach and equip are able to disciple others we know our teaching and example of living the faith is firmly rooted in their lives.

The Gospel text referenced earlier is the story of a man who had a secret — Nicodemus. He is a Pharisee and religious leader, but he cannot bring himself to admit to his friends and other Pharisees that he believes Jesus is the Messiah. Not wanting to be seen publicly, he comes to Jesus under the cover of darkness. Nicodemus, like many Christians, is living a secret life. Secret sins are bad enough, but keeping our faith a secret prevents the Church from fulfilling its mission. Keeping our love for Christ a secret deprives our lives of needed transformation and renewal.

Jesus tells Nicodemus, "You must be born again." Nicodemus protests and tells Jesus, "There is no going back, there is no starting over." In spite of his protests Jesus says, "Yes you can!"

Think of it. Before we are born we are surrounded by darkness, we are restricted in our movement,

Continued on Page 11

Continued from Page 10

dependent and powerless. That described the life of Nicodemus. When we are born we are thrust into the light, we are set free to move, to have a will and soon realize that our cries can bring adults to their knees. Our lives are transformed at birth!

Kristi and I marveled at the birth of our grandchildren. It was more amazing and emotional than the birth of our own children, as we watched our joy become the experience of our child. The joy overflowed in tears and tender embraces. It really doesn't matter who is present or walking by. I am convinced that birth is such an overwhelming emotional experience because it proclaims love's transforming power.

Jesus is telling Nicodemus that there is still hope. Nicodemus is living his life in darkness. His identity and priorities are preventing him from honesty and integrity. He is more concerned about what others think than he is with the truth and a willingness to be transformed. Jesus is telling him and us that the Holy Spirit is available right now to go to work in our lives to give us a new beginning, a new birth, a life-changing transformation.

This life-transforming power is conferred on us in our Baptism, a power to be utilized daily. Baptism changed my name. Prior to my Baptism I was John Frederick Bradosky. After baptism I was no longer just John Frederick Bradosky. I become John Frederick Bradosky Christian. The name of Christ was added to my life. I became a part of something larger — something even more important than my family heritage. I became a new person in Christ. He gave me His name!

The power for that new birth and new life is just this: "For God so loved the world that he gave His only Son, so that all those who believe in him would not perish but have eternal life." Luther writes that this one verse is "the Gospel in a nut shell."

We use the word "so" in two different ways. One is a diminutive way, "Sooo or So What!" But here it is used in just the opposite way. "For God so loved" is not the least but the greatest level of love the world could ever know or that you and I could ever experience. Only such love could produce loving results within us. Only this love could make us new, set us free and transform our life.

This word tells us that God was not willing to keep His love for us a secret. This was the way God revealed His love for us: by sending His only Son, Jesus. Our celebration of the Trinity is a way to praise God for revealing Himself to us as Father, Son and Holy Spirit. There are no secrets with God; everything is revealed, in the open, in the light. In Jesus there are no secrets. He plainly tell His disciples, "Everything I have heard from the Father I have made know to you."

In response to this profound truth, let us proclaim the truth and stop living secret lives! Let us cease keeping our faith in Jesus a secret and our love for Jesus suppressed. We must learn more about our faith and share our faith with others. Take time to nurture those relationships, like Jesus did with Nicodemus, so we can share the truth of the Gospel. These relationships matter more than anything else in life. They have eternal significance. Testify to your faith. Be a witness to the difference Jesus has made in your life. Let the Holy Spirit you first received when you were baptized in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit continue to transform your life with the power of His love, forgiveness and new life. This is what it means to love Jesus, to follow Jesus and to be His disciples.

What is in a name? Everything we need for life, love, forgiveness, salvation and transformation. In His name is our identity, for He has given us His name!

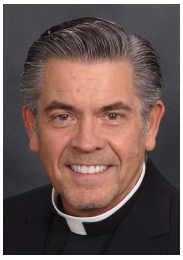
In the name of the Father, and the Son and the Holy Spirit! Amen.

Bishop to host tour of Greece, Turkey

NALC Bishop John Bradosky will host a trip to the Biblical and classical sites of Greece and Turkey Oct. 21-31. The 11-day tour will follow the journeys of St. Paul and includes a three-day cruise. There is an optional extension to Rome.

Contact Pam Charas at mcharas@earthlink.net or 937-434-0993 for a flyer and registration form.

Honoring Bishop Paull Spring for 50 years of faithful ministry



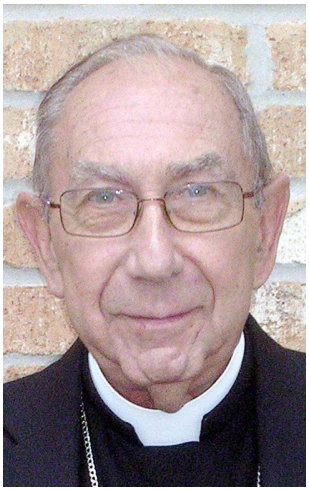
Ministry Matters

Pastor David Wendel
Assistant to the Bishop
for Ministry and Ecumenism

I have taken it upon myself in these "Ministry Matters" articles to address topics and issues of significant concern to the mission and ministry of the North American Lutheran Church. This month, I write on a topic — or rather a person — of great importance to the NALC: the 50th ordination anniversary of Bishop Emeritus Paull Spring!

The timing for this reflection is driven by the fact that Bishop Bradosky has issued an invitation to all congregations, pastors, members and friends to send a thank-offering commemorating Bishop Spring's many years of ministry, to be given to the new North American Lutheran Seminary in his honor.

It seems especially fitting that the gift should benefit the new NALS, as Bishop Spring has been involved in its creation from the start, serving as the first chair of the Board of Regents — ever committed to solid Biblical, Confessional formation of Lutheran pastors!



Bishop Paull Spring

Thank-offering gifts should be sent to the NALC Financial Office, 2299 Palmer Drive, Suite 220, New Brighton, MN 55112-2202. Please write, "Bishop Spring thank-offering" on the memo line of the check.

The total of the gifts will be announced at the NALC Convocation, Aug. 12-14, where Bishop Spring will preach at the closing Service of Holy Communion and renew his vows of ordination.

Paull Spring was ordained Oct. 17, 1965, at First English Lutheran Church, Wheeling, W.Va. Presiding at the ordination was President William Hankey of the Western Pennsylvania-West Virginia Synod of the Lutheran Church in America.

After ordination, Pastor Spring served Smicksburg Lutheran Parish, Smicksburg, Pa.; St. Mark's Lutheran Church in New Stanton, Pa., and St. John's Lutheran Church, Warren, Pa.

In 1987, he was elected bishop of the Northwestern Pennsylvania Synod, serving until 2001. Bishop Spring was a well-respected bishop/theologian within the ELCA Conference of Bishops, serving as a member and then chair of the Committee for Theological and Ethical Concerns.

A committed ecumenist, Bishop Spring also led a delegation of ELCA bishops to Europe, visiting church leaders in Canterbury, Rome, Geneva and Istanbul. In his years of ecumenical endeavor, he enjoyed the hospitality of Pope John Paul II in the papal apartments as an ELCA bishop and was greeted by Pope Benedict XVI at his weekly audience as part of the NALC delegation to a visit at the Pontifical Council for the Promotion of Christian Unity.

Having been part of that NALC delegation, Bishop Spring reminded us (Bishop Bradosky and me) of the fact that we ought not be too impressed, as "The pope puts his pants on one leg at a time just like we do!" You'll also appreciate the fact that after being greeted by Pope Benedict and before stepping off the dais, Bishop Spring's first comment was "I wonder where I can smoke my pipe?"

Continued on Page 13

Continued from Page 12

Anyone who shares such memories of Bishop Paull Spring remembers first and foremost a man who is humble, unassuming and yet disarmingly straight-forward and, yes, charmingly blunt.

Having worked so closely with Bishop Spring, Pastor Mark Chavez, NALC General Secretary, comments, "Bishop Spring is always concerned about the well-being of the whole Body of Christ and willing to commit significant time and energy to building up the Body. Add his humility and humor to his leadership skills and you have a unique and rare servant of the Church."

After serving as bishop of the Northwestern Pennsylvania Synod, Bishop Spring returned to service as parish pastor, serving Grace Lutheran Church in State College, Pa., and two years as interim at St. James Lutheran Church, Huntingdon, Pa. It was also during this time that Bishop Spring worked diligently as a leader in movements to hold the ELCA fast to Biblical, Confessional teaching and truth, especially with regard to sexuality and marriage.

Bishop Spring was chair of the group known as "Solid Rock Lutherans" which ceased work in 2005, after successfully defeating liberalizing actions within the ELCA at its 2005 Churchwide Assembly. Bishop Spring then became chair of Lutheran CORE (Coalition for Reform) working to defeat similar actions at the 2007 and 2009 Churchwide Assemblies of the ELCA.

As chair of Lutheran CORE (renamed the Coalition for Renewal) after the 2009 ELCA Churchwide Assembly, in response to calls for the formation of a Lutheran body within the Confessional tradition of Lutheranism, Bishop Spring participated in work to establish the new North American Lutheran Church, formed in August of 2010. He was elected the provisional and first bishop of the NALC and guided the church through its initial, foundational year of ministry. He remembers shaping the Four Core Values of the NALC while sitting in a hotel room late one night — that the NALC is "Christ Centered; Mission Driven; Traditionally Grounded; and Congregationally Focused." Literally, the NALC is shaped today by the faithfulness and ministry of Bishop Paull Spring!

Reflecting upon the ministry of Bishop Spring and commenting upon the thank-offering in his honor, Bishop John Bradosky states:

"It was at my first church vocation retreat at Camp Lutherlyn in Butler, Pa., that I encountered Pastor Paull Spring. I was 16 years old. His reputation for seldom shedding his clerics caused numerous candidates to watch with eager anticipation to see if his pajamas also included a clerical collar! My experience with Bishop Paull Spring confirmed that his pastoral leadership was firmly integrated into his identity day or night. Bishop Spring is a faithful pastor, a true pastor to other pastors and a preeminent theologian for the Church. He is responsible for encouraging many to consider Word and Sacrament ministry. As a bishop he lovingly cared for pastors serving in the church under his oversight. His leadership, wisdom and experience guided the church with faithful Biblical preaching and teaching as well as sound doctrine. He continues to serve the church with the same love and integrity. I am privileged to count Bishop Spring as a treasured friend. Given his commitment to theological education and his care for pastoral formation, it is fitting for us to honor Bishop Paull Spring with a thank-offering to the North American Lutheran Seminary!"

Bishop Spring married Barbara on March 30, 1967. They have three daughters, seven grandchildren and three great-grandchildren. They continue to reside in State College, Pa. When first considering the approaching 50th anniversary of his ordination, Paull asked if the NALC Executive Staff might simply meet at his home one Sunday afternoon. Bishop Bradosky realized quickly this would rob the NALC as a whole of the opportunity to celebrate and give thanks for the life and ministry of our beloved Bishop Emeritus, suggesting instead that we recognize Bishop Spring during "Lutheran Week" in Dallas, Texas, Aug. 11-14.

We pray that you will come and celebrate with us at the NALC Convocation Aug. 12-14, and either way, that you and your congregation will send a thank-offering to be included in the "Bishop Paull Spring 50th Anniversary Gift" to be given in his honor to the North American Lutheran Seminary! Thanks be to God for this faithful servant of Christ and His Church!

NALC Mission Festival is Nov. 5-7

By Pastor Trina Petersen
Mission Festival Event Planning Team

Then Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."
— Matthew 28:18-20

In the beginning God had a vision — that His creation would be ruled, subdued and dominated by those whom He created in His own image. When God established His vision, He established the mission. His vision and mission were possible. When He sent Jesus to dwell among us, His vision and mission were possible! When Jesus shared the mission of God with His disciples, "to go and make disciples," the vision was possible! For 21st century disciples the mission remains possible!

If the vision and mission were and are God's, why do so many disciples experience overwhelming feelings of fear, anxiety and inadequacy when it comes to making disciples? Allow me to disclose to you a revelation God shared with me when I asked Him this very question.

Let me begin by saying I am what some consider a 21st century wordsmith. I love words. I am one of those people who reads the dictionary and has an etymology website starred as one of my favorites. All of this to say, that when God speaks to me He often uses word illustrations.

Now for the revelation: First, God took me to multiple Scriptures: Matthew 19:26; Luke 1:37; and Exodus 3:14. After reading these Scriptures I asked God to give me revelation on what He was showing me. Even though I am sometimes slow to see and understand, God is faithful. He opened my eyes.

Why do so many disciples experience overwhelming feelings of fear, anxiety, and inadequacy when it comes to making disciples? Because too many believers are operating in the power of "I'm" rather than the power of "I AM." I saw the words as "IAMpossible" vs. "I'mpossible." With God, the Great "I AM," all things are possible. With people, things are limited to "I'mpossible," in which case the outcome is limited by human ability and therefore becomes impossible.

Our culture has been successful in developing an instantaneous, microwave, fast-paced attitude. Unfortunately, this attitude and expectation have carried over into the Body of Christ. We have tried to shorten I AM to "I'm." Too often the emphasis of discipleship has been placed on what I'm able to do or what I'm comfortable with instead of what I AM is able to do and what I AM desires! By contracting or shortening I AM to "I'm" we have lost the power of "A," — the fact that God is…

+ **A**lpha — the beginning and the end.
+ **A**uthor and Finisher — He wrote the story.
+ **A**lmighty — all seeing, all knowing, all power in His hands.
+ **A**doni — the Lord of all!

When the will of the disciple is in alignment with the will of God, the Great I AM, modeling, mentoring, multiplying, maturing and miracles are possible — capable of happening, existing, and being true! When the heart and the mind of the disciple are open to the teachings of Jesus, the mission can be accomplished. When the spirit of the disciple is sensitive and obedient to the Holy Spirit, the mission of I AM is possible! Should you choose to join us in November and accept the assignment, fear not! Be strong and courageous! The mission of I AM is possible!

Early-bird registration for the Mission Festival is now open at $75 per person. The rate increases to $100 per person on Sept. 1. For more information or to register go to: thenalc.org/mission-festival-2015.

What hymns are you really getting from 'Sundays and Seasons'?

A warning about the ELCA's online worship planning resource

By Candice Johnson
and Beth Alford

After responding affirmatively to a call to plan music for the 2014 NALC Convocation in Charleston, S.C., we were given the following instructions:

1. With the exception of hymns during Holy Communion at the Friday morning worship service, we were to use only hymns from the *Lutheran Book of Worship* (LBW).

2. We could use hymns from sources other than LBW for music during Holy Communion at the Friday morning worship service; and

3. All copyright compliance issues would be covered by *Sundays and Seasons* (an online worship planning resource from Augsburg Fortress, the ELCA publishing house) or CCLI (Christian Copyright Licensing International).

Our instructions were clear and appeared on the surface to be easy to follow. Yet, when we began downloading hymns listed in *Sundays and Seasons* as LBW, we encountered an unforeseen difficulty. In order to follow our clear directive to use only hymns from LBW, we would not be able to use *Sundays and Seasons* because with very few exceptions, what *Sundays and Seasons* listed as LBW was not, in reality, what is in the LBW. This meant that the only way to follow our first directive was to scan each hymn from the LBW for the Convocation worship folders (which we did).

While this was not a discovery that we were looking to make, nor one that we initially greeted warmly, we give thanks to God for calling us to plan music for the 2014 NALC Convocation — for it is that experience that led us to be increasingly more shrewd and discerning as we plan worship in the congregation we serve.

The focus of this article is on music; however, our message involves theological and doctrinal issues around the music we sing in worship — a topic of vital importance to worship leaders in our church.

Singing hymns affects us corporately as well as individually. Music is a powerful tool for bringing a message into our hearts, minds, and spirits. It shapes not only our individual thoughts and beliefs but our corporate thoughts and beliefs as well.

Our hymns strengthen us by proclaiming God's Word. They comfort us by pronouncing God's presence. They equip us by declaring God's truth; and they call us to repentance by asserting God's sovereignty.

Pastor David Wendel's *Ministry Matters* article in the 2015 February/March *NALC News* clearly articulates that "what we say [and we would add what we sing] in worship over time will change our beliefs, and our beliefs will naturally be reflected in what we say [and sing] … our belief must be reflected in worship, and our worship must reflect properly our beliefs."

If you are a *Sundays and Seasons* subscriber and user, you are about to read something that may be challenging for you to accept; however, the purpose of this article is to raise awareness.

Much has been written about the ELCA agenda *Sundays and Seasons* supports in its suggestions for prayers and liturgical practices. This article, however, focuses solely on the nearly impossible likelihood that a subscriber to *Sundays and Seasons* is able to truly download an LBW hymn.

While our congregation does not use *Sundays and Seasons,* we realize that *Sundays and Seasons* does streamline the time and energy needed for

Continued on Page 16

Continued from Page 15

worship planning. In addition, it makes the time-consuming, and sometimes confusing, task of dealing with copyright issues manageable.

Indeed, ease and economy are commodities of value; however, it is important for us to remember that ease and economy are not necessarily indicators of value. This is most definitely true in the case of *Sundays and Seasons*. Our research has led us to conclude that this resource is untrustworthy and follows unethical practices — falsely representing the product it delivers to its customers.

For most of us, getting what we order and pay for is important. A company's choice to make a substitution with neither our consent nor our notification is typically unacceptable. Among other things, we make purchases based on needs, desires, and financial resources — and because of those considerations, we expect to get what we pay for.

We have discovered that it is a rare exception to download a hymn from *Sundays and Seasons* marked as the LBW version that actually matches what is in the LBW. It is clear that *Sundays and Seasons* is attempting to control what we sing in worship. While some of the differences between what is ordered and what is received are glaring, some are quite subtle. Revisionist tactics, however, are often subtle and may go unnoticed. That subtlety is what we believe God is calling us to reveal.

The hymns marked and downloaded as LBW version, yet containing changes that are easily overlooked, work cultural values and influences into our worship. And this is something of extreme importance to us as the Body of Christ.

We have checked word-for-word, note-for-note the 55 hymns used at the 2014 NALC Convocation (as well as numerous other hymns). Space does not allow for us to share all our findings, so we have chosen nine examples that are typical — enough, we hope, to cause your antennae to rise as you use this resource. Some of the inconsistencies we discovered have consequence only to musical phrasing and accompaniment arrangement. Others are changes that are easily overlooked, yet bring cultural influences into our worship.

1. In *Sundays and* Seasons, you click to download LBW 84, ***Brightest and Best of the Stars of the Morning***. What you receive, however, is from the book of *Evangelical Lutheran Worship* (ELW) 308 — with names of Christ such as "Redeemer," "Maker," "Monarch," and "Savior" all beginning with lowercase letters. These words are capitalized in the LBW.

Thus, you are not receiving what you ordered. More importantly, however, is the subtle difference the uppercase letters make. Not capitalizing Redeemer, Maker, Monarch, and Savior discounts these titles as references to Jesus — our only Redeemer, Maker, Monarch, and Savior — and instead implies that He is merely one of several possible redeemers, makers, monarchs, and saviors from which to choose.

2. In *Sundays and* Seasons, you click to download LBW 522, ***Come Thou Almighty King***. What you receive is a melody line only. The LBW version, however, has an accompaniment consisting of traditional singing parts, yet *Sundays and Seasons* says only a melody line is available. In addition to the musical difference, the lyrics in Verse 2 are ELW 408 lyrics ("thy word," rather than thy Word). Without notification of the differences, they sell that download as the LBW version.

Again, we see the subtle difference an uppercase letter can make. The Bible contains many words; however, in its entirety it is the Word of God — not merely one of His words.

3. In *Sundays and* Seasons, you want to download LBW 500, ***Faith of Our Fathers***. The option screen lists ELW 812 and LBW 500 as the same hymn. This, however, is not true. Not only is the music very different, but as in the example above, lowercase "saving word" replaces "saving Word." Yet, the download is sold as the LBW version.

4. In *Sundays and* Seasons, you click to download LBW 359, ***In Christ There is No East or West***. What you receive is not even close to the LBW version.

Musically it is similar to the second example above in that you receive a melody line only. Of more consequence, however, is that you receive ELW lyrics! Verse 1 substitutes "but one community of love" for "one great fellowship of love." Verse 2

Continued on Page 17

Continued from Page 16

substitutes "humankind" for "mankind." Verse 3 substitutes "disciples of the faith" for "brothers of the faith" and "all children of the living God" for "who serves my Father as a son."

5. In *Sundays and* Seasons, you want to download LBW 363, ***Christ is Alive! Let Christians Sing***, and you get the message that it is not downloadable. What you are offered instead is ELW 389, a hymn with the same title. In this hymn, however, LBW Verse 3 is omitted, and all other verses are rewritten — beginning with Verse 1 substituting "the cross" for "His cross," and continuing through five verses of changes. None of the lyrics are even slightly similar to LBW 363 — making no mention of our crucified and ascended Lord; nor any proclamation of Christ's power, ruling, and conquering; nor any reference to the world being our Father's creation.

6. In *Sundays and* Seasons, you click to download LBW 259, ***Lord, Dismiss Us with Your Blessing***. As in the third example above, LBW 259 and ELW 545 are listed as being the same hymn.

Again, this is not true. Not only is the music very different, but in Verse 2 "Gospel" is not capitalized. In this case, you receive ELW 545, yet the download is sold as the LBW version.

7. In *Sundays and* Seasons, you want to download LBW 509, ***Onward Christian Soldiers***. Because this hymn is not in the ELW, you may think it is safe. However, we have yet to find the source represented in the download sold as LBW 509. Again uppercase letters are changed to lowercase. In Verses 2 and 3, the word "Church" is never capitalized in the download, yet the download is sold as LBW.

8. In *Sundays and* Seasons, you want to download LBW 557, ***Let All Things Now Living***. The message you receive is that it is not downloadable. The choice you are given is ELW 881, which is identical except for the beginning of verse 2: "God rules all the forces" rather than "His law He enforces." This substituted phrase has an entirely different meaning than the text in the LBW hymn.

9. In *Sundays and* Seasons, you want to download LBW 377, ***Lift High the Cross***, and receive the message that it, too, is not downloadable. You are given ELW 660 as the only choice. ELW 660 omits LBW Verse 2, and in Verse 3 changes "soldiers" to "servants." Again, an entirely different hymn than the one you want.

Scripture calls us to be shrewd in our discernment. The hymns we choose for our congregations to sing need to be clearly aligned with Biblical truth and with our theology. They need to be conduits that draw us deeply into God's presence, not agents that subtly divide the Body and draw us into acceptance of other influences.

In conclusion, be aware that *Sundays and Seasons* does not deliver what it purports to deliver. Selling hymn downloads as the LBW version when, in reality, changes have been made — without notice to the customer — is an unethical practice to say the least. This is a resource that is attempting to control what we sing.

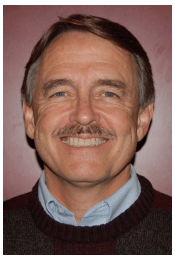
We encourage you to be in prayer about the resources you use in worship planning. Is the ease, convenience, and economy of using *Sundays and Seasons* truly an indicator of its value? If you decide to use it as a convenient way to choose and download hymns, we pray that you exercise extreme caution when using this resource.

Sola Publishing provides an alternative — *SOWeR*. In addition to trustworthy, theologically solid liturgical and pastoral aids for planning worship, hymn suggestions from a variety of resources are offered. The subscription cost is much less than *Sundays and Seasons* because it requires that congregations take responsibility for their own copyright compliance. While this task may seem daunting at first, once a system is set up it can be done with relative ease.

It is our prayer that, as congregational leaders, we all diligently and continually seek God's guidance and direction as we plan every aspect of our worship and that we are open to God's redirection and correction when that is necessary. May we support and encourage each other in this endeavor.

Candice Johnson, a Commissioned Lay Minister, and Beth Alford, Director of Music Ministries, serve St. Timothy Lutheran Church in Goose Creek, S.C.

Changing Religious Landscape



In Pursuit of the Great Commission

Pastor Don Brandt

The Pew Research Center had not done an extensive "changing religious landscape" survey since 2007. But findings released this May were based on their most recent survey taken in 2014.

These Pew Research studies are based on 35,000 adult respondents, which is a very large sample for this kind of survey. And since there is no U.S. Census data related to religious identity, Pew Research findings constitute the best information available regarding the current (statistical) state of religious life in the United States.

The easiest way to digest this new data is to compare 2014's results with those in 2007.

1. The percentage of those who are religiously *unaffiliated* rose more than six percentage points since 2007 — from 16 percent of the total population to 23 percent. This represents an increase in this category from 36 million Americans to 56 million. And note: This change has occurred in just seven years.

2. These 56 million religiously-unaffiliated Americans are comprised of those who self-identify as either atheist, agnostic, or "nothing in particular."

3. Americans who identify themselves as either atheist or agnostic increased from just under 4 percent of adults to 7 percent. This means that the majority of the religiously unaffiliated are "nothing in particular."

4. The number of Americans who identify themselves as Christian declined from 79 percent of adults in 2007 to 71 percent last year. These self-identified Christians, needless to say, include millions who are not connected in any formal way to organized Christian communities. Also, at least a third of Americans today do not maintain the religious affiliation in which they were raised.

5. Losses among particular Christian denominations and/or congregations were most significant among mainline Protestants (5 million lost in seven years) and, for the first time, Roman Catholics. Lutherans, by the way, now comprise 5 percent of the U.S. population. Note: This doesn't mean they actually attend a Lutheran congregation, only that they identify themselves as "Lutheran."

6. Evangelical Protestants had a small loss — 1 percent — as a percentage of the total population, but, unlike mainline Protestants and Roman Catholics, the evangelicals actually experienced growth in raw numbers.

7. Pew Research indicates there are clear generational factors in these trends — with Millennials far less likely to be a part of a faith community than Boomers were in the 1980s. Multiple surveys indicate that less than half as many Millennials are attending church compared to their parents when their parents were younger adults.

These are dramatic changes. Questions worth pondering: To what degree do you see these trends in your community? What about in the life of your congregation and in local churches? Finally, have you created an opportunity for your members to discuss the ramifications of these trends when it comes to congregational planning?

If some of these trends are impacting your ministry perhaps it's time to "share the burden" and address these challenges as a congregation. And don't just vent or commiserate with one another; discuss how you might respond in terms of congregational outreach.

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

Defining and Pursuing Discipleship

Theological Reflections on Discipleship from Dr. Nathan Howard Yoder

The following paper was written by Dr. Nathan Howard Yoder, an NALC pastor and a professor of the North American Lutheran Seminary, Gordon-Conwell Lutheran House of Studies. He is also a member of the Joint Commission on Theology and Doctrine. Dr. Yoder wrote this paper in response to a request from the Joint Commission.

The Joint Commission sees this paper as a valuable theological introduction to the ministry of discipleship among our congregations. Its intention is to support and ground theologically the NALC's ongoing emphasis on discipleship. The Joint Commission trusts that this paper will provide a Biblically-based rationale for our life and mission as disciples of Christ.

Bishop Paull E. Spring
Convener
Joint Commission on Theology and Doctrine

Defining and Pursuing Discipleship

Already you are clean because of the word I have spoken to you. 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. I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing (John 15:4-5, ESV).

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

The call to discipleship brings about the reality of having Jesus Christ as one's Lord. Being a disciple does not mean, first and foremost, subscribing to a particular course of instruction or a discipline of service and morality. It means to be in *fellowship* with Jesus Christ, and thus to persevere in the calling to hold fast to his person.[1]

Following a Risen Lord

There is an "irreducible discontinuity"[2] separating the band who followed Jesus along the trails of first-century Judea — the Twelve, the Seventy-Two (Luke 10), and their larger circle — from the multitude of us who have been brought into fellowship with the Lord after his crucifixion and resurrection. Pre-resurrection discipleship failed. It ended in sinful betrayal, denial, and fear. Jesus told the Twelve this would happen: "You will all fall away because of me this night. For it is written, 'I will strike the shepherd, and the sheep of the flock will be scattered'" (Matthew 26:31-35). The Lord had chosen them to accompany him to his Passion — an end he clearly, patiently, and repeatedly explained to them (Matthew 20:18; Luke 18:31; Mark 10:33). He described fellowship with him in the language of this terminus: "If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me" (Matthew 16:24).[3].But when his hour came, they denied *him* instead. The cross marked the end of the disciples' road with Jesus. It stood in judgment of their guilt in abandoning him, just as it stands in judgment against the pathology and complicity of the whole fallen human race ("This Jesus, whom *you* killed," Acts 3:15; 5:35).

In light of the empty tomb, the cross also marks the *beginning* of *post*-Easter discipleship. Everything has changed. Jesus died *for* those who denied him, for the sinners of every time and place who handed

Continued on Page 20

[1] Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *The Cost of Discipleship*, trans. R.H. Fuller and Irmgard Booth (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1959), 59; cf. David Yeago, "Theses on Discipleship," 1.1, 2. This unpublished work informs much of this statement.
[2] Maurice Lee, "Discipleship" (paper presented at the 2014 Younger Theologians Colloquium, Charleston, SC, July 21, 2014), 5.
[3] Bonhoeffer, 87.

Continued from Page 19

him over to death. He took our pathology upon himself, before his Father in heaven. And risen from the dead, he himself is our righteousness. The post-resurrection call to discipleship is therefore a sacrament of the *forgiveness of sins*. Holy Baptism is this call and sacrament: it is both the inception of fellowship with Christ and the enduring bond between the Lord and his disciples.[4] No one is "fit" to be a disciple; in Baptism, the Holy Spirit grafts dead sinners onto the True Vine of their living Lord (John 15:1) and exchanges their sin for his righteousness. The new disciple has received a priceless treasure: "victory over death and the devil, forgiveness of sin, God's grace, the entire Christ, and the Holy Spirit with his gifts" (Large Catechism 4:41).[5] To be a disciple is thus to be *redeemed*, delivered from the domain of darkness and transferred to the ownership and kingdom of Christ (Colossians 1:13).[6]

Citizenship in Christ's kingdom entails responsible recognition of his lordship — both reliance upon him in his Word for life and salvation, and acknowledgment that he is worthy of obedience.[7] Post-Easter, the bond of fellowship conveyed in Christ's command to "take up your cross and follow me" is incorporated into the reality of the Paschal Mystery: "We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life" (Romans 6:4).[8] To have faith thus entails *holding fast* to Baptism, our bond with Christ in his suffering, death, and resurrection, an identity that is not of our making or our choosing but stems from the Lord's command.[9] No longer naked in our sin and hiding from the sight of God (Genesis 3:7), we now stand with Christ before the Father and, in the Holy Spirit, wear the righteousness of our Lord himself ("For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ," Galatians 3:27).

St. Paul uses λογίζομαι, "reckon," in describing the *active engagement of faith* with Baptism ("So you also must *consider/reckon* yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus").[10] The Lutheran Confessions frame this reckoning as consciously wearing the "daily garment" of Baptism (Large Catechism 4:84)[11] and the continual return to Baptism in repentance, always adhering in faith to the forgiveness that flows from the vine of Christ. "If we wish to be Christians," writes Luther, "we must practice the work that makes us Christians… [and] where amendment of life does not take place, Baptism is not being used but resisted" (Large Catechism 4: 85, 68).[12] Where branches remain on the source of their life, flowers and fruit will readily appear (John 15:8).

Christ Present in Word and Sacrament in the Church

With the Lord's ascension, the post-Easter call to "follow after Christ" has changed. Discipleship no longer means to follow a visible person; instead, it means to be joined to Christ's Body by the Holy Spirit and to hold fast to the Risen Lord by the means of grace he personally specified. Through Baptism, the Holy Spirit brings us into the Church, "the mother that begets and bears every Christian through the Word of God" (Large Catechism 2:42).[13]

Christians of all ages are called to engage actively with Holy Scripture. Indeed, the "first and most basic way" one recognizes the authority of God's Word is by *reading* it[14] and *listening* to it being read. Parents thus promise at the Baptism of children to "place in their hands [and in their ears] the Holy Scriptures."[15] The daily study of Scripture is thus an essential part of the "reckoning" of faith. First and foremost, however, we are not called to keep the

Continued on Page 21

[4] Bonhoeffer, 230-232; cf. Yeago, Thesis 2.4.
[5] *The Book of Concord, The Confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church* [hereafter cited as BC], trans. and ed. Theodore Tappert (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1959), 441-442.
[6] Bonhoeffer, 231; cf. Yeago, Thesis 1.9.
[7] Bonhoeffer, 57-58; cf. Yeago, Theses 1.4, 9.
[8] Yeago, Thesis 2.6.
[9] Bonhoeffer, 231; cf. Yeago, Thesis 1.3.
[10] David Yeago offers that "reckon" is preferable to "consider," as it implies "taking something into account practically," Thesis 2.9 and accompanying footnote.
[11] BC, 446.
[12] BC, 446, 445.
[13] BC, 416.
[14] David Yeago, "Authority in the Church 1: The Authority of the Word of God in the Church" (paper presented at the NALC Pastors Conference in Orlando, FL, February 10-12, 2015), 5.
[15] *Lutheran Book of Worship* (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1978), 121.

Continued from Page 20

Bible to ourselves, but to share in it. In the assembly of the baptized, Scripture is read publicly, and exposition is offered. The Gospel is *proclaimed* in the midst of Christ's people.[16] This proclamation is the apostolic kerygma; St. Peter's sermon on the Day of Pentecost in Acts 2 engaged the Scriptures to declare to the people both the advent of the Holy Spirit (Joel 2:28-32) and the coming of the Davidic Messiah in the person of Jesus Christ, who sits at the right hand of God.[17] "Cut to the heart" by the Spirit through the Word and with Peter's instruction, three thousand people follow the Lord's command: they repent and are baptized. And, St. Luke writes, "they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers" (Acts 2:42).

The three thousand thus act in obedience to another command: to "do this in remembrance of me" (1 Corinthians 11:24). These words "are addressed to disciples of Christ; hence whoever would be one of them, let him faithfully hold to this sacrament, not from compulsion, coerced by men, but to obey and please the Lord Christ" (Large Catechism 5:45).[18] Trusting that Jesus is precisely where he indicated, the baptized receive his very body and blood for the forgiveness of sins and the nurturing of their faith and life in him. The "specific and concrete way" in which the Lord has specified his availability to his disciples is in Holy Communion.[19] **Before all else, to be *Christ-centered* is to recognize the Eucharist at the heart of discipleship: obedience to the command and reliance on the accompanying promise.** "The fellowship consists in this," writes Luther, "that all the spiritual possessions of Christ and his saints are shared with and become the common property of him who receives this sacrament."[20] The Lord's Supper serves up the fullness of salvation, an honest-to-God foretaste of the eternal feast to come.

Even public reading, proclamation, and sacrament, however, do not constitute the full scope of sharing God's Word. The entire service of the *ecclesia* is rich with it. "Let the word of Christ dwell *in*/*among* you richly," writes St. Paul, "teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in your hearts to God" (Colossians 3:16). In the liturgy of the Word — the "public work" of the Church to declare to the world who she is and what she is about[21] — the Church rehearses and celebrates the entire Gospel story, the wondrous love of salvation history. In the liturgy, the flock of Christ practices confessing the faith together (*I believe in God the Father Almighty*). Here the Church prays together in clear imitation of our Lord himself, instructing its members to approach their heavenly Father in like manner in the name of Christ with every need, concern, and opportunity for thanksgiving throughout their daily lives. The liturgy is not provided to suit the perceived "religious needs" of people, but to praise and honor the Holy Trinity, and thus to form the assembly in orthodoxy ("right praise").[22] **The service of Word and Sacrament, and the liturgy in which it occurs, is therefore the primary form of *evangelism* (sharing the Gospel), and its task is the formation of disciples of all nations and ages.**[23] In the eucharistic assembly formed by the Holy Spirit, one is made a disciple, fed as a disciple, and learns what it means to *be* a disciple.

"… Teaching them all that I have commanded you."

Along with the bath and the meal, the proclamation and the praise, comes the *instruction*. "Make disciples of all nations," our Lord said, "baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, and *teaching* them all that I have commanded you" (Matthew 28:19-20a). This catechesis accompanies Baptism, both its inception and its continuation.[24] At every stage of faith and

Continued on Page 22

[16] Yeago, "Authority 1," 6.
[17] Yeago, "Authority 1," 7.
[18] BC, 452.
[19] Frank Senn, *A Stewardship of the Mysteries* (Mahwah, N.J.: Paulist Press, 1999), 30.
[20] *Luther's Works,* American Edition, 55 vols., eds. E. Theodore Bachmann and Helmut T. Lehman (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, 1960), 35:51.
[21] Senn, 31.
[22] Robert W. Jenson, "Catechesis for Our Time," in *Marks of the Body of Christ*, eds. Carl E. Braaten and Robert W. Jenson (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1999), 143-144; cf. Senn, 31.
[23] Senn, 31.
[24] Senn, 29.

Continued from Page 21

life, intentional and thorough instruction remains the "solemn responsibility of the Christian community."[25] Catechesis occurs in multiple forms and settings: one-on-one, in small groups, and in larger educational circles. Adult initiates to the faith prepare for their Baptism through measured instruction. Parents of children to be brought to the font prepare for their promise to cultivate their children's faith by consciously reviewing their own. Young people raised in the Church prepare to affirm their Baptism by studying the content of the faith in which they were baptized. Those who have returned to the Church after a time of absence prepare to rejoin the assembly by reviewing the blessed heritage that is theirs. Concrete human relationships are a fundamental part of this instruction, but they are not unmediated.[26] In every stage and in every form, catechesis is *congregationally focused*. It involves the disciple in the liturgical life of the community, its worship and its fellowship.[27] And fellowship with the Lord in Holy Communion remains the center of catechesis — as with Baptism, both as to inception and continuation.

Earthly Vocation

"If you love me, you will keep my commandments" (John 14:15). Catechizing into the faith entails holding one another accountable to the Lord's commands, prominent among them the two commandments upon which "depend all the Law and the Prophets": "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind … and you shall love your neighbor as yourself" (Matthew 22:37-40). A life centered in the assembly of Word and Sacrament is formed for service in courageous joy in the common tasks and relationships of human community. "Go in peace, serve the Lord," we say; and so, disciples go forth into the world to serve, bearing the peace of Christ with them. They go to be salt, to prepare and preserve the world for its final fulfillment. They go to be light, reflecting in dark places the True Light that shines on them. They do this as teachers, physicians, soldiers, farmers, millworkers, merchants — any number of vocations — practicing humble kindness and justice for the glory of God.

Discipleship in the world calls for careful, measured obedience to Christ in love. "It seems to me," writes Luther in the Large Catechism, "that we shall have our hands full to keep these commandments, practicing gentleness, patience, love towards enemies, chastity, kindness, etc., and all that is involved in doing so. But such works are not important or impressive in the eyes of the world" (Large Catechism 1:313).[28] Baptismal identity interacts with civic responsibility, and the fruit of the Spirit is transformative of human community in many and various ways. The righteous pursuit of civil justice is an arena for discipleship, as government is an estate ordained by God to curtail the outward effects of sinful violence and thus make possible the peaceful sharing of Christian love. Likewise, marriage is a holy estate, a "wedding" of Genesis 2:28 ("be fruitful and multiply") with Matthew 28 ("make disciples"). Parenthood is a divinely-ordained office whereby mothers and fathers provide for their children's instruction in the faith, and the whole congregation — whether married, single, or widowed — shares in the ongoing catechetical task of welcoming these children "into the Lord's family."[29]

In the shifting circumstances of life, a disciple is called always to reckon with the baptismal mystery of having died to sin and risen a new creation in Christ.[30] And the world being what it is, the yield of such persistence in faith will mean suffering. Jesus bluntly explains this reality: "Do not think that I have come to bring peace to the earth. I have not come to bring peace, but a sword. For I have come to set a man against his father, and a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law. And a person's enemies will be those of his own household" (Matthew 10:34-36). To follow Christ as Lord is to be *partisan*: to remain steadfast in the external Word of God, a Word that is blessedly accessible to all but uncompromisingly opposed to alteration.[31] To know the truth of the

Continued on Page 23

[25] *Occasional Services, A Companion to Lutheran Book of Worship* (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1983), 15.
[26] Senn, 30.
[27] Senn, 30-31.
[28] BC, 407.
[29] LBW, 125.
[30] Yeago, Thesis 2.8, 9.
[31] Yeago, "Authority 1," 2.

Disaster Response Servant Event is July 12-17

NALC Disaster Response is sponsoring a servant event July 12-17 at the HARP Mission in Caldwell, Ohio. The theme of the event is "We Are His Hands."

Participating church groups and individuals will provide home maintenance, repair, wheelchair ramps and other help for families in crisis, the disabled, widowed, elderly, seniors, and veterans.

They will also learn how to repair and rebuild homes and families destroyed by disasters and experience a mock disaster led by the NALC Disaster Coordinator, Mary Bates.

Daily devotions and recreation will be coordinated by Upper Arlington Lutheran Church.

Additional servant events may be scheduled if this week does not work for congregations and there is interest in an alternative date.

Cost is $150 per person. Registration and medical release forms will be emailed upon request.

For more information, contact Tammy Schultheisz at 740-509-1132 or Mary Bates at batesm55@gmail.com.

Continued from Page 22

Lord is to be free from the empty promises of the devil, and holding fast to Baptism means refusing to "submit again to a yoke of slavery" (Galatians 5:1). To be a disciple means to confront the forces of evil with the discerning mind of Christ and the courage of faith, and to suffer the consequences — even unto death — with the joy and peace of the Holy Spirit and the sure and certain hope of life everlasting before us.

You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit and that your fruit should abide… (John 15:16)

To be a disciple is to be formed by the Word of God. In obedience to our Lord's Great Commission, the North American Lutheran Church should understand its call to be *mission-driven* in the context of the baptismal vocation to be *Christ-centered* and *congregationally focused*. The NALC was formed precisely as an act of discipleship — to speak the truth in love, obeying the Risen Lord's command to "feed my sheep" (John 21:17) by faithful discernment in wisdom and committed action in accountability to ensure that the Gospel is properly preached and the sacraments rightly administered (Augsburg Confession, Article 7).[32]

We are living in a time when the story, content, and morality of the faith are alien to the world around us, a world that is rapidly engaging in open hostility toward the Gospel. Our Lord's command is to make disciples: to sow the seed of the Word and to tend the stalks of faith when they sprout forth.
We should use Luther's Catechisms regularly as serious introductions to Holy Scripture and indispensable tools in the reckoning process of faith ("What does this mean for us?").[33] We are to teach what it means to be chosen by our Lord in Holy Baptism and to adhere to Christ and be conformed to him in Holy Communion, proclamation, sharing the Word in reading and liturgy, and daily prayer. The Church will thereby prepare disciples of all ages to confess Christ, to live out their calling, and to suffer for the Lord's sake amidst the changes and chances of life.[34] We must recognize that fruit in the world blossoms from branches connected to their eucharistic source, and thus that discipleship occurs, first and foremost, in the worship life of the congregation. This is life together in the Body, the *totus Christus* of the Paschal Mystery: complete participation of disciples in the suffering, death, and resurrection of Christ.[35] Discipleship in human community thus depends upon active incorporation in the divine community: with the Son, before the Father, in the Spirit.

[32] BC, 32.

[33] Yeago, "Authority 1," 14.
[34] Yeago, Thesis 2.8.
[35] Jenson, 141.

NALC
North American Lutheran Church

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

NONPROFIT ORG.
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
TWIN CITIES, MN
PERMIT NO. 7007

Christ Centered + Mission Driven + Traditionally Grounded + Congregationally Focused

NALC Contact Information

NALC Ministry Office
3500 Mill Run Drive
Hilliard, OH 43026-7770
614-777-5709
bseifert@thenalc.org

NALC Administrative Office
2299 Palmer Drive, Suite 220
New Brighton, MN 55112-2202
888-551-7254 or 651-633-6004
nalc.mnoffice@thenalc.org

North American Luth. Seminary
The Rev. Dr. Amy Schifrin
aschifrin@thenals.org

Bishop
Bishop John Bradosky
jbradosky@thenalc.org

General Secretary
Pastor Mark Chavez
mchavez@thenalc.org

Missions
Pastor Gemechis Buba
gbuba@thenalc.org

Ministry & Ecumenism
Pastor David Wendel
dwendel@thenalc.org

Please send donations to the office in New Brighton, Minn.

NALC News

Published monthly by

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

Phone: 614-777-5709

www.thenalc.org

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

Please copy and share this newsletter widely.