

NALC News

North American Lutheran Church

June 2016

NALS celebrates graduation of four

The North American Lutheran Seminary celebrated the graduation of four of its students at the Trinity School for Ministry Commencement on May 14.

Commencement exercises took place at St. Stephen's Church in Sewickley, Pa. The commencement speaker was the Most Rev. Dr. Foley Beach, Archbishop of the Anglican Church of North America and Bishop of the Anglican Diocese of the South.

A Baccalaureate Communion Service was held on May 13 at St. Stephen's Church. Dr. David Yeago, NALS and TSM faculty member, was the preacher.

The four students who graduated with a Master of Divinity (M.Div) from both Trinity School for Ministry and the North



New North American Lutheran Seminary graduates pose after graduation with NALS professors. Pictured are Dr. David Yeago, Hans Tolpingrud, Patricia Braunscheidel, Randall Drafts, Jr., Registrar Fara Pienkosky, Christopher Wendel, and the Rev. Dr. Amy Schiffrin, Seminary President.

American Lutheran Seminary were: Patricia Braunscheidel, Randall Drafts, Jr., Hans Tolpingrud and Christopher Wendel.

Hans Tolpingrud was one of two students awarded the William D. Henning Award for Expository Preaching from Trinity School for Ministry.

The Rev. Dr. Amy Schiffrin, NALS President, assisted in hooding the graduates and gave the closing prayer.

The NALS also awarded the Diploma of Lutheran Studies to Dawn Rister. The Diploma of Lutheran Studies is presented to students who have completed an M.Div. at another institution and take their Lutheran-focused courses at the NALS in preparation for ordination.

The NALS congratulates all of the graduates and looks forward to many more years of forming pastors for ministry.



Dr. David Yeago preaches at the Baccalaureate Communion Service for the North American Lutheran Seminary and Trinity School for Ministry.

Nominees for NALC Executive Council

Convocation will also elect NALS Board of Regents

The 2016 NALC Convocation Aug. 10-12 in Anaheim, Calif., will elect one pastor and one lay person to four-year terms on the NALC Executive Council.

Three lay people and three pastors have been nominated for the Executive Council.

Nominated for the lay position are Kathryn Hudnall of St. Timothy Lutheran Church in Charleston, W.Va.; Lynn Kickingbird of Peace Lutheran Church in Edmond, Okla.; and Janet Rash of Salem Lutheran Church in Salisbury, N.C.

Nominated for the clergy position are Pastor Carl Haynes of Christiana Lutheran Church in Salisbury, N.C.; Pastor Kenneth Kimball of Old East and Old West Paint Creek Lutheran Churches of Waterville, Iowa; and Pastor William E. Maki of Zion Lutheran Church in Saint Marys, Ohio.

Pastor David Schafer of Waukon, Iowa, has been nominated for a four-year term on the NALC Court of Adjudication.

Seminary Board of Regents

Nine pastors and one lay person have been nominated for the North American Lutheran Seminary Board of Regents.

The NALC Convocation will elect four members of the seminary board — three members will be elected for six-year terms and one will be elected to a four-year term to fill a vacancy on the board.

Nominated for the six-year terms are:

- + Pastor Cathi Braasch, Elwood, Neb.
- + Donna Evans, Pittsburgh, Pa.
- + Pastor Jeffray Greene, Brooks, Ga.
- + Pastor Kristopher Madsen, Fresno, Calif.



Kathryn Hudnall



Lynn Kickingbird



Janet Rash



Carl Haynes



Kenneth Kimball



William Maki

- + Pastor Dennis A. Meyer, Grayslake, Ill.
- + Pastor Allen Schoonover, Noblesville, Ind.
- + Pastor Kris Snyder, Gonvick, Minn.

Nominated for the four-year term are:

- + Bishop Ralph Kempinski, Aiken, S.C.
- + Pastor Thurmond Plexico, Concord, N.C.
- + Bishop Paull Spring, State College, Pa.

Biographical information on the nominees is available online at www.thenalc.org/nominations.

Additional nominations are still possible. Three or more delegates representing at least three congregations may together submit additional nominations. Such nominations must be submitted to the Nominating Committee no later than June 27.

'Holy God, Holy Lives' is theme for 2016 NALC Convocation

"Holy God, Holy Lives" is the theme of the 2016 NALC Convocation Aug. 10-12 at the Wyndham Anaheim Garden Grove Hotel in Anaheim, Calif. The theme is based on 1 Peter 1:16: "You shall be holy, for I am holy."

The Convocation opens with worship at 1:30 p.m. on Wednesday, Aug. 10. The Convocation is scheduled to conclude at 5 p.m. on Friday.

A Mission Festival will be the focus of the Convocation Wednesday afternoon through Thursday morning around the theme "Faith is Made Whole in Community." The Mission Festival is designed to inspire and serve as a resource to congregations.

The Convocation is the annual gathering and business meeting of the NALC. The Convocation will elect members of the Executive Council, Court of Adjudication, and North American Lutheran Seminary Board of Regents. The Convocation will also receive financial reports and consider budgets.

The Rev. Dr. Malcolm Guite, Chaplain of Girton College of the University of Cambridge, England, is the featured guest speaker for the Convocation. Dr. Guite describes himself as a poet-priest of the Anglican Church, giving lectures, concerts and poetry readings. He collaborates with musician Steve Bell, who was featured at the 2015 NALC Convocation. The two will blend their unique gifts to highlight the Convocation theme.

The \$185 registration fee for the Convocation includes Wednesday dinner and lunch on Thursday and Friday.

The Convocation is preceded by the Women of the NALC Annual Gathering and the Carl E. Braaten and Robert D. Benne Lectures in Theology.

The Women of the NALC Annual Gathering will be held on Tuesday, Aug. 9, from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. The theme is "Holy Families in Today's World."



Featured speakers will be Gary and Laurie Pecuch of faithwebbing.com and Pastor Cathi Braasch. One delegate from each congregation may vote at the Annual Gathering. Additional members may attend as visitors. The \$75 registration fee includes lunch. The Gathering will also consider changes to the Women of the NALC governing documents.

The Carl E. Braaten and Robert D. Benne Lectures in Theology are scheduled for Tuesday afternoon, Aug. 9, and Wednesday morning, Aug. 10. The \$115 registration fee for the lectures includes lunch on Wednesday.

Hotel rooms are available for a discounted rate of \$163.55 per night (includes taxes and fees). Discounted rates for SuperShuttle from the John Wayne Orange County airport (SNA) and other area airports are available.

To register or for hotel or shuttle discount codes or other information on any of the events during Lutheran Week go to thenalc.org.

Faith is made whole in community

The first sessions of the NALC Convocation will be the annual Mission Festival. The Mission Festival Planning Team offers this introduction to the festival theme.

Kintsugi is a beautiful form of Japanese art that is very counter cultural to our American sensitivities. In American culture, we go to extreme lengths to cover our blemishes and brokenness. We are master make-up artists. We put on false exteriors and push our wounds deep into the recesses of our souls. These wounds are so deep that most will never know the wounds are there. Sometimes even we don't know they exist.

Jesus compares the teachers of the law to whitewashed stones in Matthew 23:27. They are beautiful on the outside, but the inside is full of death and brokenness. So much of our time is spent covering our brokenness. We whitewash our lives so they look pristine to anyone who sees us. We hide our struggles because we have believed the lie that showing our wounds is weak. We have bought into the culture's belief that our definition of beauty is the same as our Creator's.

It is not! Christ tells us a different story. Life — the Jesus life — isn't about never showing weakness or working to hide every crack in our image. The Jesus life is trusting that He holds us in our brokenness. He works with our wounds. Our pieces are placed back together by the Creator of creativity.

But the other truth is this: brokenness doesn't heal alone. Isolated, our brokenness is the shattered shards of dreams and hopes and failures. In community, through faith and love, our brokenness becomes the masterpiece of God's mosaic. And it is beautiful.

The Communal Triune God has come to create a Kingdom community among us. Faith is personal. It cannot be private. An individual Christian is a contradiction. We are made whole together and together we are beautiful.

This is what *Kintsugi* is about. Instead of throwing away the broken, it is the painstaking task of



restoration. Instead of working hard to remove the evidence of the broken, the artist highlights the remnant fractures by infusing the glue with gold. The result is an unparalleled and unduplicatable work of art. It bears the artist's touch, but also a devotion and tenderness.

This is the work of Jesus on you. He is restoring you, not by removing every wound this life has carved into you. Instead, through Christ's cross, the one who knit you together in the womb is gluing you back together. The gold is His glory, and it highlights His handiwork.

Like all good artists, the Lord has a studio where this work is played out. We are His studio. The Body of Christ. The community.

Luke 5 tells the story of a paralyzed man being healed by Jesus. Friends lowered the man through the roof of a house because they couldn't get through the crowd. Verse 20 says, "When Jesus saw their faith, he said, 'Friend, your sins are forgiven.'"

Those friends were the studio. It was their faith that moved Jesus. Faith is communal. Without others, it is something less. The community is God's mosaic.

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Lectures to focus on Person of Christ

To celebrate the Reformation, the annual Carl E. Braaten and Robert D. Benne Lectures in Theology will devote the 2016 lecture series to the Second Article of the Creed. The annual theological conference, held prior to the NALC Convocation, is scheduled for Aug. 9-10 in Anaheim, Calif.

The lectures will honor the Reformers by reflecting on what was most important to them, the confession of our Lord Jesus Christ. The 2016 lectures will respond to our Lord's question, "Who do you say that I am?" and reflect on the Church's answer, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God."

Dr. Carl E. Braaten is among the speakers for the NALC's annual lecture series named in his honor. Other speakers include Dr. Phillip Cary, Dr. Wesley Hill, Dr. Mickey L. Mattox, and Dr. Michael Pasquarello III.

The \$115 registration fee includes lunch on Wednesday. To register or for more information go to thenalc.org.

The titles of the lectures and the speakers are:

"Revisiting Bonhoeffer's Question: Who is Jesus Christ for us today?" - Dr. Carl E. Braaten, one of the leading theologians in the Lutheran Church for the past 50 years. He has authored and edited numerous books, journals and papers. He taught at the Lutheran School of Theology in Chicago for many years. He later founded the Center for Catholic and Evangelical Theology.

"The Form of Christ in us: Christ and the Christian Life" - Dr. Phillip Cary, Professor of Philosophy at Eastern University in St. Davids, Pa. He earned his doctorate and master's degrees from Yale University. He is the author of four books on the theology of St. Augustine.

"Admirable Conjunctions: The Person of Christ in Philippians 2:5-11" - Dr. Wesley Hill, Assistant Professor of Biblical Studies at Trinity School for Ministry in Ambridge, Pa. Dr. Hill is a graduate of Wheaton College and Bethlehem College and



Carl E. Braaten



Phillip Cary



Wesley Hill



Mickey L. Mattox



Michael Pasquarello

Seminary. He earned master's and doctoral degrees from Durham University in Durham, England. Dr. Hill is the author of three books.

"Christ the Center of Everyday Life: Lessons from Luther's Genesis Lectures" - Dr. Mickey L. Mattox, Professor of Historical Theology at Marquette University in Milwaukee, Wis. He earned his doctorate at Duke University and holds master's degrees from both Trinity Evangelical Divinity School and Simon Greenleaf School of Law.

"Confessing Christ in the Preaching of the Fathers" - Dr. Michael Pasquarello III, the Lloyd John Ogilvie Professor of Preaching at Fuller Theological Seminary in Pasadena, Calif. He earned a doctorate and a master's degree in the history of Christianity from The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. He earned his M.Div. from Duke Divinity School. He is the author of several books on preaching.

Giving and Forgiving

Dear Disciples of Christ Jesus,

In preparing a script for a stewardship video, I became fascinated with the juxtaposition of the fourth and fifth petitions of the Lord's Prayer, "Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us."

Giving and forgiving seem to flow from one to the other. We are blessed to be a blessing, and we are forgiven to offer forgiveness. As we receive grace from above, we are being taught to be gracious people. As we have been blessed by the loving generosity of our Father, so we are being trained to become generous people.

While thinking about this, I was reading the last version of a book by friend I came to love and respect while serving in California, Dallas Willard. In his book, *Renovation of the Heart*, chapter four contains a section called "The Centrality of Giving." He writes, "Giving and forgiving are, of course, central to the divinely restructured life, as we take on the character truly suited to the human soul." He comments on the widespread misunderstanding, even among Christians that giving is giving up something, being deprived, sacrificing, being impoverished. In this way self-denial takes on a highly negative value.

In the Large Catechism Martin Luther writes, "For just as we daily sin much against God, and yet He forgives everything through grace, so we, too, must ever forgive our neighbor who does us injury, violence, and wrong, shows malice toward us, etc. If, therefore, you do not forgive, then do not think that God forgives you; but if you forgive, you have this consolation and assurance, that you are forgiven in heaven, not on account of your forgiving, for God forgives freely and without condition, out of pure grace, because He has so promised, as the Gospel teaches, but in order that He may set this up for our confirmation and assurance for a sign alongside of the promise which accords with this prayer, Luke 6:37: 'Forgive, and ye shall be forgiven.' Therefore Christ also repeats it soon after the Lord's Prayer, and says, Matthew 6:14: 'For if



From the Bishop

Bishop John Bradosky

ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you."

Luther tells us that that while we are forgiven by Christ apart from any conditions, He gives a means for a sign, confirmation and assurance of this promise that we are transformed into those who graciously forgive others.

What then would be the sign and confirmation of the fourth petition of the Lord's Prayer? Because of Christ's abundant blessings in our life perhaps it is that we are transformed into those whose lives overflow with generosity (1 Corinthians 8:2).

No one can attempt to follow Jesus and avoid dealing with faithful stewardship. They are inseparable. Jesus taught about it and provided the example. The Apostles passed on His teaching and followed His example. The Church through the ages has always depended on it. Stewardship seems just as essential to the Body of Christ as forgiveness.

We often make a mistake emphasizing that we give because of the need of the local congregation to fix the roof, pay the bills, keep the doors open. In the same way, we sometimes make decisions about giving based on our like or dislike of the cause or purpose. But Christian stewardship is not first and foremost because there is a need.

We give first because Christ gave Himself for us. Our giving is a response to what we have already received. We give because the grace of God overflows from our life because of Christ's presence in our life. Our giving is an act of faith in the all-sufficiency of Christ.

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Paul also reminds the Corinthians in his second letter that “God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that always having all sufficiency in everything, you may have an abundance for every good deed” (2 Corinthians 9:8).

Jesus trains His disciples to have a different view of the world. We don’t talk about money and possessions like the rest of the world. In the Kingdom of Heaven Jesus proclaimed — that Kingdom that broke into their lives and our world in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus — there is a confidence, assurance and trust that Jesus has already given us all we have and are.

God is the owner and the loaner of all that we possess. We are called to be good stewards over what God has given to us. The assurance of this Kingdom of Heaven worldview is the back drop for Jesus teaching, “Give and it will be given to you; good measure; pressed down, shaken together, running over, they will pour into your lap” (Luke 6:38).

From a human perspective, it may seem that our lap is empty and we are living with scarcity and fear. When all we see is the cross and tomb, our resurrected Lord comes to us with this teaching and assurance of God’s care and limitless provision. He says, “Do not be afraid little flock, it is your Father’s good pleasure to give you the Kingdom” (Luke 12:32). It is the power of the love of Christ and the experience of His care that frees us from the burden of “looking out for ourselves.”

Discipleship is about Christ being formed in us. Rather than impoverishment and sacrifice, Jesus’ teaching and example are discipleship training for becoming generous people.

This is a helpful way to consider our offerings. We are conforming our life to His and being trained in a discipline that is designed to assist us in practicing generosity. It is impossible to consider the life of Jesus without being aware of His gracious and generous character.

Giving in the Kingdom of Heaven is not a matter of deprivation but strength and fulfillment. In giving we experience the power of Christ flowing through us. Giving is one of the highest expressions of the new

creations that we become in Christ. Giving is more joyous than receiving, not because it is a deprivation, but because the act of giving is the expression of being truly alive.

If you took the word *giving* in the previous paragraph and substituted the word *forgiving* it is just as appropriate and true. Forgiving others is not a passive activity but an active, dynamic and essential part of demonstrating Christ’s character in our lives through our words and deeds.

Teaching the faith moves into living the faith. Changing our understanding involves changing our behaviors. Are we becoming more generous as a people? Is Christ’s generous character being formed in us? If so, what is the evidence of that generosity?

I am convinced that Jesus is concerned that we become generous with our spouse, generous with our children, generous with our neighbors, our coworkers and, yes, generous with our brothers and sisters in the Body of Christ. In the Kingdom Jesus came to proclaim, I am certain He wants every follower, every family, every congregation in every Mission District and in the entire NALC to be known for their generosity, for their conformity to the character and person of Jesus.

I am equally certain that Jesus is as concerned about our forgiving as He is about our giving. This forgiveness is just as important in our relationships with our spouse, children, neighbors, coworkers and our brothers and sisters in the Body of Christ.

Discipleship is also about taking on responsibility for holding one another accountable in Christ, encouraging and supporting one another for faithful stewardship. When it comes to stewardship, too often we have been content to say I won’t talk about your stewardship if you don’t comment on mine. Such avoidance never leads to greater responsiveness but only to neglect.

In a similar way instead of holding one another accountable for both seeking and offering forgiveness, we have often been content to say, “I won’t talk about your sin if you don’t comment on mine.” Avoiding confession and absolution as well

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NALC Life-to-Life Discipleship Team

By Pastor Eric Riesen

About a dozen pastors from the NALC and Bishop John Bradosky gathered in Denver May 26-27 to discuss discipleship and the future of the NALC. We must make disciples and not merely attract attendees to church. During that meeting I shared the following story.

One night a little boy was being put to bed by his father. After their prayers the father kissed him and began to leave when the boy said, "I want a drink of water." The father kindly responded, "You've had a drink of water and it's time to go to sleep." The father left the room but after a moment the little boy said loudly, "I want a drink of water!" The father said, "You've had a drink of water now go to bed." Not to be put off, the little boy cried even more loudly, "I want a drink of water!" The father sternly replied, "You've had a drink of water. It's time for bed. If you ask again I'm going to spank you!" Silence. Then, as loudly as he could the little boy said, "When you're coming back to spank me, will you bring me a drink of water?"

The point? That little boy had a vision of what he wanted, and he was willing to pay the price to get it.

What about us? Do we have a vision for making disciples in our congregations? If so, are we willing to pay the price to make the vision a reality?

Lutherans are fond of quoting Dietrich Bonhoeffer and speak about "the cost of discipleship." But there is some confusion about exactly what the cost *is*. Didn't Jesus already pay the cost? In Luther's *Small Catechism*, we read of the work of Christ Jesus:

"At great cost He has saved and redeemed me, a lost and condemned creature. Not with silver or gold, but with His holy and precious blood and His innocent suffering and death."

What could a "lost and condemned creature" add to the "holy and precious blood" of Jesus? We are saved by grace — not discipleship. Right?

It is our natural Lutheran tendency to want to stress grace. However, what we must *always* remember is

that the gifts of grace — forgiveness, life, salvation, etc. — are not dispensed in a general way to all through the general goodness of a benevolent Deity. Rather, the gifts of grace are *only* given specifically through a *particular* person — Jesus Christ. As Dr. David Yeago wisely reminds us: "We do not receive the benefits of Christ detached from His person."

So, what's the cost of discipleship? On the one hand, it's true, Jesus paid it all. We can't add or subtract from the gift God has given. On the other hand, apart from His person we do not receive the benefits of the gift. St. Paul described his experience as a disciple like this: "I have been crucified with Christ ... and the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God who loved me and gave Himself for me" (Galatians 2:20). Curious observers of the cross are *not* disciples.

Christianity is not a spectator religion in which we are third party observers of a transaction between God and Jesus — a transaction from which we benefit. This is the theology of glory about which Luther (and others) warned us. It is a theology that has wreaked havoc in the Church. We must die with Christ in order to live with Christ. There is no discipleship without death and resurrection. This is why Baptism is *always* a call to discipleship

Sometimes we hear Christians speak about the necessity of having a "personal relationship with Jesus." That's true. Disciples do have a personal relationship with Jesus. Disciples are those who know Jesus Christ in a deeply personal and intimate way — so much so that they desire to "know Him and the power of His resurrection, *and share in his sufferings*" (Philippians 3:10). We must always be wary of a cross-less discipleship. Joel Osteen is just one of the many popularizers of such "discipleship."

But, all this begs the question. If discipleship is so central to our ministry, how do we make disciples today? In the prevailing culture, everything we believe is, at some level, under attack. How can we create congregations in which discipleship is simply part of the DNA? What will that look like?

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NALC Disaster Response update

Volunteers, materials and financial gifts representing NALC congregations and members are actively assisting thousands of people affected by fire, wind and water across North America through NALC Disaster Response.

In Canada, as those who have lost homes and life possessions to unprecedented wildfires and seek to rebuild their lives.

In South Carolina, where the long term rebuilding from weeks of rain and torrential flood waters from rivers and broken dams left devastation behind near the beginning of the year. The NALC shower trailer and cots are at St. Peter Lutheran Church in Lexington, S.C., to help host volunteers.

In the Houston and wider Texas area, where repeated record rainstorms since May 2015 have resulted in historic flood damage. In the past few weeks Peace and St. Paul congregations in Rosenberg, Texas, have been reaching out to care for another church devastated by the water. They are providing temporary housing while permanent housing is restored or rebuilt.

More to come with pictures next month. You can help with financial support. Gifts may be given online at www.thenalc.org or sent to the NALC Disaster Response; 2299 Palmer Drive, Suite 220; New Brighton, MN 55112-2202. You may designate a particular disaster or just Disaster Response and the funds will be channeled where needed most.

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These are the kinds of questions that will guide the Life-to-Life Discipleship Team. Together we will work with leaders in the NALC and ecumenically to find ways to foster cultures of discipleship within *every* congregation. Let's not fool ourselves into thinking that there is some quick fix. Disciples are not made quickly or easily. Discipleship is "a long obedience in the same direction," as Eugene Peterson explains.

In order to do our best, we need your help. What challenges do you face in your congregation? What are some of the things that you're doing to create cultures of discipleship? In what ways can the NALC assist congregations? I'll be chairing the Life-to-Life Discipleship Team, and I'd like to hear from you. You can contact me by email at emriesen@gmail.com.

I also need to stress that the goal of the Life-to-Life Discipleship Team is *not* to develop a program or a curriculum. This is not a flash-in-the-pan ministry emphasis which leaves congregational life basically unchanged. We need to ask some hard questions about congregational life and leadership. Our goal is to help us all to know Jesus more deeply and truly. Making disciples then becomes simply what we do because of who we are. Or rather, *who* we know. We are a people who know the cost of discipleship, because we know Jesus Christ.

Please remember the work of the Life-to-Life Discipleship Team in your prayers. And again, please feel free to contact me with your thoughts and ideas. I'll share them with the other members of the team.

Bishop Bradosky

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as the offering of forgiveness are damaging to our life in Christ and roadblocks to our transformation.

It is my prayer for all of us in the North American Lutheran Church that we no longer understand stewardship as an "add-on," as a necessary evil, or as a once-a-year fall program we endure, to make ends meet in the coming year. It encompasses the entire life of a believer. Beginning at our Baptism, our life in Christ is a response to the grace we received and continue to receive daily.

Stewardship is just as essential to our baptismal understanding as forgiveness. Paul's words to the Corinthian church is my prayer for every person and congregation in the NALC, that we will seek to excel in forgiveness and stewardship, as in faith, speech and love, that we may continue to experience, joy overflowing in a wealth of generosity!

Call of a Pastor vs. ‘Hiring and Firing’

Paul, called by the will of God to be an apostle of Christ Jesus. — 1 Corinthians 1:1

Undoubtedly, I am writing these articles with an eye toward those congregations and pastors currently in the NALC Call Process. As this is one of my primary responsibilities as Assistant to the Bishop for Ministry and Ecumenism, I devote much of my time and energy to working with, listening to, and prayerfully guiding our pastors and congregations through the process.

One of the disappointments, however, in this work in the NALC is the realization that so many of our congregational leaders have little understanding of the “call” of the pastor, relying continually upon the mistaken notion that the council of the congregation “hires” their pastor. This naturally translates to the assumption that the council also has the authority to “fire” the pastor.

We could speculate upon the origin of such a mistaken understanding, but better that we simply acknowledge the reality, the harm that it does, and how we may more faithfully consider the call of the pastor, and so, the working relationship between pastor, council and congregation.

The NALC Manual on the Call Process states on page 9:

Calling a pastor is not the equivalent of “hiring an employee.” Many in the congregation will be tempted to think in terms of secular employment: develop a pool of applicants, interview them all, select the best one, and fire them if they don’t work out. The call process is much more relational and covenantal. Calling a pastor is much more like a marriage, and the call process more similar to finding a mate for life. In this sense, going slowly and intentionally, seeking God’s will, and developing a relationship are more important than lining up skills and needs.

We all realize, I trust, that there are certain aspects of the calling of a pastor that relate to employment: the congregation votes to extend the call; the council, with congregational approval, is



Ministry Matters

Pastor David Wendel

Assistant to the Bishop
for Ministry and Ecumenism

responsible for setting compensation and benefits, reporting payment of compensation to the government, etc.

We are not arguing here that there are not some ways in which the congregation is employer and the pastor is an employee. The point being made, however, is that thinking of the pastor only as, or primarily as, an employee is detrimental to the relationship of pastor and congregation and will often lead to a deterioration in this relationship. Why?

First, the pastor, while acknowledging the aspects that have to do with “employment,” understands himself or herself as called by God to this congregation. The action in the call of the pastor is first and foremost the work of God through His Holy Spirit leading and guiding the process. The congregation and the pastor are seeking God’s will and once convinced that God intends for this congregation and this pastor to serve together, the congregational call indicates their acceptance of God’s will.

In other words, when the congregation becomes convinced that God wants them to call *this* pastor to be their pastor, the congregational vote is an expression of “Thy will be done!” The ordination and installation rites reflect this understanding. We acknowledge, together, that the call comes from God, even as St. Paul understood his call as coming not from men but by the will of God.

This is important as the pastor must speak God’s Word and God’s will, even when it may make the hearers uncomfortable. When the pastor preaches

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God's Word, saying, "Thus says the Lord," the preacher must never say, "Thus says the Lord if it is all right with you, and you don't mind me saying it since you've hired me and I must please you." This does not provide the preacher with freedom to push his or her own agendas or wants or desires, but should free them to preach God's Word powerfully and boldly, in its fullness in both Law and Gospel.

Second, an attitude of "hiring" and "firing" the pastor is destructive to the relationship because it leads council leaders to think of themselves as "boss" of the pastor. This necessarily leads to an adversarial relationship, rather than a relationship built on trust, care and love for one another. It's in this way that we describe the pastor-congregation relationship as relational and covenantal, rather than employee-employer.

I believe the marriage image helps us to appreciate this. No marriage will survive and thrive if husband or wife thinks of themselves as "boss" of the other. Together with the instruction in Ephesians 5 for the husband to be head of the wife as Christ is head of the Church, Paul also calls for husband and wife to be subject to one another out of reverence for Christ, husbands loving their wives as Christ loves the Church, wives respecting their husbands.

Paul explains that within this essential relationship within God's order of creation, there is to be mutuality, respect, honor, love and trust. What's more, however, and what is often missed, is that St. Paul concludes saying, "This is a great mystery, and I mean in reference to Christ and the Church." (Ephesians 5:32 RSV).

Just as no healthy, sane man or woman considers that they are "hiring" a spouse whom they can "boss" around, no council or congregation is well-served by thinking they are "hiring" a pastor of whom they will be "the boss." Entering into a covenantal relationship of mutuality, respect, honor, love and trust will serve pastor and council well and finally will build up the Body of Christ as a whole and foster unity, harmony and peace within the congregation.

But — I can hear some council leaders protesting — how can we hold our pastor accountable?

Shouldn't there be accountability, goal-setting and evaluation? My simple answer is "Yes, and it goes both ways!"

The most unproductive process in most congregations is the anonymous congregational survey evaluating the pastor, or the annual review in which the council or executive committee sit the pastor down and hand the pastor a list of all the things he/she hasn't done in the past year.

Consider how that would be received in a marriage! This strategy for evaluating and holding the pastor accountable rarely achieves the desired outcome and often leads to an early departure of the pastor, often to the consternation of a majority in the congregation who may love and appreciate their pastor and won't understand the laundry list of complaints compiled to present to the pastor.

If you take nothing else away from this Ministry Matters article, then please remember this and share it with your congregation or congregational leaders:

Accountability and evaluation within the congregation should be mutual, respectful and aimed at how pastor and leaders can more faithfully and effectively build up mission and ministry within the congregation.

What does this look like in the congregation?

1. Each year, in a council retreat or other context, work together as pastor and church leaders to develop goals and strategies for implementation. Ask together, what will make our mission and ministry better, more faithful, more effective? Assign tasks and responsibilities that can be evaluated, adjusted and shared with others in the congregation so that all know what the "leadership team" — pastor and church leaders — will be working on in the coming year.
2. Work together to maximize strengths of the leadership team. Not every pastor or layperson has all the gifts needed for ministry. For example, if the pastor is not particularly skilled at financial oversight, form a finance team of skilled persons who will have primary oversight of finances.

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3. Every quarter, at least, take time at council meetings to review the goals and strategies, allowing every member of the leadership team to reflect on how they are doing individually, as committees or task forces, and as a team as a whole. The question should be, “How are we doing, together, to make mission and ministry happen in this place?”

4. Foster a cooperative, communicative environment among the leadership team (pastor, staff, elected council persons) where regular and expected evaluation and assessment happens with respect, honor and trust as the leadership team understands that a congregation’s mission and ministry doesn’t stand or fall because of the pastor alone, but that all share in faithfulness and effectiveness. Remember, any council or individual church leader who blames stagnation or decline of their congregation on the pastor solely isn’t looking honestly at themselves or the council or the congregation. As in a marriage, both parties bear responsibility for the breakdown of the relationship — the pastor and the council and the congregation are responsible together for the health, vitality and fruitfulness of ministry.

5. Finally, when a council understands itself to be hiring a pastor, it will follow that at some point, they may decide it is their responsibility to fire their pastor. We all understand that there are times of difficulty and decline in congregations, and pastors have faults and shortcomings, as do we all. However, the act of a council to fire their pastor never achieves the desired outcome, as stated above. It always creates distrust, anger and bitterness within the congregation as a whole, and results in loss of members, loss of income, unhealthiness in the congregation which will surely be passed on to cloud and infect the next pastor/congregation relationship. Although council leaders may believe they are doing the right/righteous thing to “save” the congregation, this is never the case.

How does the council address situations without resorting to “firing” the pastor?

Follow the above suggestions, proactively, to avoid arriving at such a situation. Create a climate of

health, cooperation, communication and trust from the start of the pastor/parish relationship. Contact resource persons within the NALC, from outside the congregation to assist, guide and help find resolution and positive ways forward. The bishop’s office exists to provide such assistance and support — one of the blessings of the NALC as a church body. Deans are currently forming Pastoral Care and Transition Teams (PCAT Teams) to be first responders within Mission Districts to provide early assistance and support, rather than when the situation has reached crisis level. Don’t ignore issues, difficulties and tensions. As in marriage, the earlier we address complications in our relationships, the better chance for a fruitful outcome.

Please know that the positive energy and effort invested in the relationship between the pastor, the council and the congregation will not only help those involved in the leadership team, it will bear good fruit within the community as a whole and witness to the world how we Christians love and care for one another! It is, finally, all about our witness to a dark and unbelieving world, that Jesus Christ is the Light and that we, the baptized children of God, seek to “let His light so shine in us that others see our good works and give glory to our Father who is in heaven!” (Matthew 5:16 and quoted in the LBW rite for Holy Baptism)

May God bless our pastors and congregations in developing and modeling healthy, strong and deepening relationships that give glory to God as we seek to follow Jesus Christ, together, as His disciples!

NALC congregations seeking pastors

The updated list of NALC congregations seeking to call pastors is available online at <http://thenalc.org/pastoral-vacancies>.

Full profiles of the congregations are available online on the NALC Network — nalcnetwork.com — in the Congregational Profiles group.

The online list is updated each month.

Part-time Clergy Corps

Ministry to Smaller and Part-Time Congregations

Given the realities of our increasingly secular culture, it may be that there will be more congregations in the NALC unable to afford full-time pastors who require full compensation.

Currently, we have nearly 10 smaller congregations in all areas of North America seeking pastors who may be able to serve part-time, with part-time compensation. These are the most difficult positions to fill, and often require finding local retired or semi-retired pastors already receiving some retirement benefits, but still wishing to serve Christ and His Church. In many cases, however, these pastors are unwilling to move from home long-term and there may be no congregations seeking part-time ministry in their area. How do we address both of these needs, with part-time congregations being served by part-time pastors?

Currently, the NALC bishop and staff are exploring what may be called a “Part-time Clergy Corps.” This would involve retired, semi-retired or other pastors who may serve with only part-time compensation, are unwilling to relocate permanently, but would be willing to serve a congregation needing part-time ministry for nine months.

This would allow the pastor in the “Part-time Clergy Corps” to move to a new and different area of North America to provide service to a congregation from the beginning of September through Holy Trinity Sunday. This would provide a smaller congregation with stable ministry for all of the major seasons and festivals of the Church year, without struggling week to week for pulpit supply.

At the end of the nine months, the pastor would return to his or her permanent home and the congregation would find pulpit supply for the summer.

A pastor in the Part-time Clergy Corps might begin service in another congregation the following September, or may serve only the one nine-month

period. The congregation, hopefully, would have another member of the Part-time Clergy Corps with them again in September through Holy Trinity Sunday. Of course, if a pastor wishes, he or she could serve for the entire year, until the next member of the “Part-time Clergy Corps” would arrive to serve.

Local congregations utilizing a pastor from the Part-time Clergy Corps would agree to pay a part-time salary, perhaps some limited benefits, and provide a furnished parsonage or apartment.

The benefit to the congregation is stable, faithful Word and Sacrament ministry from an experienced, seasoned pastor with energy and vitality. The benefit to the pastor is the opportunity to have part-time service while visiting and getting to know, perhaps, a completely new context for ministry in a different part of North America.

At this time, pastors and congregations who might consider participating in the Part-time Clergy Corps project are asked to send an email to Pastor David Wendel, Assistant to the Bishop for Ministry and Ecumenism — dwendel@thenalc.org — expressing interest and initial reaction to the project.

Continued from Page 4

This year’s Mission Festival will be taking place during Convocation. As we focus on “Holy God, Holy Lives,” we recognize that you can’t be Mission Driven by yourself. God has given us family, the Church.

We look forward to journeying together as “Faith Is Made Whole in Community.”

Come. Be a part of what God is up to in His studio. We know it is risky, but lean into those wounds and watch the Artist make something beautiful for His grand mosaic.

Mission Resources are available

As baptized disciples of Jesus Christ, living members of His body, our “mission” is to share the good news of His saving death and resurrection with those living in darkness, fear and godlessness, bringing the Kingdom — His risen presence — near that through God’s Word and Holy Spirit, they may become his followers, baptized into His Church, disciples, with us, in the Kingdom of God. ***Mission is sharing the good news of Jesus’ death and resurrection, bringing the Kingdom near, making disciples, together, following all that Jesus has commanded us.***

I have been preparing for this year’s Convocation and reflecting deeply on the theme, “Holy God Holy Lives,” from 1 Peter 1:16: “You should be holy for I am holy,” and the Mission Festival theme, “Faith is Made Whole in Community.” Both themes lift up the many times our Father calls us to be in community and provides that community for us. We are never alone as long as we are in the Scriptures. At the first sending out of the disciples, Jesus did not send them out alone; He sent them two by two. We are not alone, and we are not called to do ministry alone.

The NALC is a Christ-Centered church. Jesus reminds us at His ascension that He is with us always, even to the end of the age. We are a Mission-Driven church. Mission cannot be done in isolation. It is about relationships and building strategic mission networks. We are Traditionally Grounded, which binds us to our brothers and sisters in history and today around the world. We are Congregationally Focused and organized to make strong mission centers to serve locally. All this is done in community. The work is strengthened by a dedicated mission team. The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few. We cannot do this alone.

It is my joy to share some helpful and newly updated resources as we continue to journey together and prepare for Convocation:

Good News! Letter is a weekly staff blog update that will continue to be shared. Stories from local, domestic, and global mission visits, as well as Bible



Missions Update

Pastor Gemechis Buba

Assistant to the Bishop
for Missions

study, devotion and preaching are available at:
www.nalcnetwork.com/good-news.

Good News! Media is the continuation of our weekly video blog. These short videos tie in to the lectionary readings of the week and can be used and downloaded for worship, Bible study, Sunday school or for personal use:
www.nalcnetwork.com/good-news/goodnews-media

July Webinar: “Living and Growing in the Kingdom: Necessity of God’s Word,” presented by Rev. Dr. Gemechis Buba on Thursday, July 28, at 7:30 p.m. ET. In order to live, grow and work in the kingdom, God’s Word is desperately needed. This may sound obvious, but we are hoping that a new desire and hunger for God’s “living and active” Word will result in Jesus’ kingdom ways being birthed in our lives and in our churches. To register or for more information, please visit:
<https://attendee.gotowebinar.com/register/7951898264998830851>

NALC Aging Network – On Thursday, July 7, at 7:30 p.m. ET, Pastor Brad Hales continues his online webinar series about the opportunities for discipleship and ministry among seniors. To register for this webinar, or for more information, visit:
<https://attendee.gotowebinar.com/rt/523803314754411266>. Webinar ID: 150-463-579

MissionConnect continues to share local, domestic, and global mission stories each week. If you would like to receive MissionConnect updates as a weekly text message, please text “Mission” to 619-356-2910. Or visit MissionConnect on the web at: <http://nalcnetwork.com/missionconnect>.

Maddie Benson joins NALC staff

Maddie Benson has joined the staff of the North American Lutheran Church. She began serving as the NALC receptionist in May. She works at the office in Hilliard, Ohio.

Maddie will be the first voice people will hear when they call the NALC offices as she will answer all incoming telephone calls.

Maddie grew up in Columbus, Ohio, and graduated from Upper Arlington High School. She graduated from Otterbein University in Westerville, Ohio, in May with a degree in Sociology.

She married Aaron Benson on June 3. They live in Dublin, Ohio.

She is a member of Upper Arlington Lutheran Church.



Youth and Family Ministry Update

The North American Lutheran Church has entered into an agreement with faithwebbing.com to provide children's, youth, and family ministry coaching for NALC congregations.

Faithwebbing.com is a web-based youth and family ministry coaching service offered by Gary and Laurie Pecuch of St. John's Evangelical Lutheran Church, Grove City, Ohio. To gain access to the members only section, fill out the contact form at faithwebbing.com. Here's the monthly update:

1. We posted the website tutorial from the April webinar, both in its entirety and with subsequent breakout clips from the same webinar for topical viewing. Just go to the faithwebbing.com site and on the NALC Main Menu page you will find the newly posted webinar.

2. We held our final webinar of the school year on May 17 (Outcome-based Youth Ministry). That webinar is also available on faithwebbing.com on the NALC main menu page.

3. Webinars will pick up again in the fall on topics from the list of 40 Faith Skills that we have developed. Please let us know if you have any specific topics you wish for us to host for a webinar.



4. Laurie and Gary Pecuch of faithwebbing.com will be in Anaheim in August for the NALC Convocation.

5. We are interested in your feedback. There is increasing interest in our hosting a youth ministry seminar in the winter of 2017. Although geared toward adults, high school students from your congregation would be welcome. Contact us if you have an interest. We are trying to see if this is a viable option or if we need to wait a year.

6. Several have asked for a "NALC Outcome-based Ministry Certification" Program. The program would begin with an on-site training session in Ohio, followed by a year of webinars, readings, planning, implementing, and direct coaching, and culminating in a final on-site session. If you know of someone that might be interested in such a certification program please contact us.



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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

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