

Responding to Hurricane Matthew

Lutheran World Relief and Water Mission are among the relief agencies responding to devastation left by Hurricane Matthew in Haiti. NALC Disaster Response is helping with the response to the storm in the United States.

Both LWR and Water Mission are recognized ministries of the North American Lutheran Church.

Hurricane Matthew was a Category 4 storm that had a major impact on the Caribbean. The storm brought strong winds, heavy rains and storm surges, with the brunt of the storm arriving in Haiti on Tuesday, Oct. 4.

These conditions triggered flash floods, landslides and mudflows, endangering lives and leading to extensive property damage. In Haiti, initial assessments are ongoing but the amount of damage being reported thus far is staggering. A bridge connecting Port-au-Prince to the southwest area of the country has collapsed, which will further hamper assessment and relief efforts.

Most of the humanitarian focus as a result of Hurricane Matthew remains on Haiti, where the government formally requested humanitarian assistance. This country has struggled to recover from the 2010 earthquake, with many people still living in temporary shelters. The United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs and the Office of U.S. Foreign Disaster Assistance have teams on the ground.



Hurricane Matthew caused significant damage in Haiti. (Lutheran World Relief photo)

Many relief organizations have teams in Haiti and have begun assessments. While emergency shelters, food and water are a high priority, disease outbreak remains a major concern as cases of cholera have already been reported. This is especially true given Haiti's past issues with cholera following the 2010 earthquake. The government now estimates that more than 1.4 million people — 13 percent of the population — are in need of humanitarian assistance. World Food Program indicates that 95 percent of shelters and harvest have been lost in some coastal areas. 750,000 people, including 315,000 children, are in urgent need of humanitarian aid for the next three months. The number of people living in shelters has jumped to 175,509 living in 224 temporary shelters.

Lutheran World Relief

Lutheran World Relief is currently making plans to respond to the immediate and long-term needs of people in Haiti affected by Hurricane Matthew. The immediate response will reach 7,000 people in some of the most affected areas.

In the Northwest, LWR is working with its local partner on a cash-for-work project to repair roads damaged by the hurricane and clean irrigation canals.

In the Central Plateau of the country, LWR will focus on hygiene and food kit distributions. Through coordination with the ACT Alliance, a global faith-based humanitarian coalition, LWR will also respond in the south through distributions of temporary shelter kits as well as hygiene and food kits.

LWR Personal Care Kits and Baby Care Kits were distributed to people in Les Cayes and Aquin, which are some of the hardest hit areas in the country.

LWR is shipping 100 community water filtration units from pre-positioned stock from the United Nations Humanitarian Response Depot warehouse in Dubai, which was made possible by a donated charter flight. These units will be distributed in coordination with LWR's partner Norwegian Church Aid, reaching 4,600 people in the Southwest where clean water will be essential for cholera prevention. These units will be used in conjunction with a distribution of hygiene kits and hygiene promotion campaigns.

LWR's longer-term response will focus on food security in the north through the distribution of seeds and tools such as fertilizer and fishing equipment. LWR will also implement a food-for-work program in the Central Plateau.

LWR began working in Haiti in 1997 to advance rural development, increase food security and gender equality, protect natural resources and strengthen partners' organizational capacity. After



Water Mission staff in Haiti working with water treatment systems to help provide safe water following Hurricane Matthew.

Haiti's devastating earthquake in 2010, LWR provided material resources and support to restore lost livelihoods, while also working to strengthen rural communities taking in those displaced by the disaster. Currently, LWR programs increase smallholder farmers' participation in value chains, improve food security and promote reforestation in northern Haiti.

To donate or for additional information about LWR's response to Hurricane Matthew and other emergencies around the world, please visit lwr.org.

Water Mission

Water Mission is assessing the need for access to safe water in Haiti and Cuba following the aftermath of Hurricane Matthew. Water Mission's Haitian program office reports that the need for access to safe water will be substantial.

Water Mission currently has 40 technical staff at its office in Port au Prince, Haiti, and is evaluating the impact of Hurricane Matthew with partners such as Catholic Relief Services and Food for the Poor. In addition, Water Mission is gauging Cuba's ground conditions with its strategic partners and will send staff from other country program offices as needed when travel to the country is safe.

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Water Mission currently has inventory for 18 safe water treatment systems and chlorinators in Haiti capable of serving up to 100,000 people. Additional resources are needed to deploy or redirect existing systems currently in Haiti and ship new treatment systems there or to Cuba.

According to the World Health Organization, massive flooding is associated with water-borne diseases such as typhoid, cholera, and hepatitis. Water Mission's safe water treatment systems will help prevent such outbreaks and give people immediate access to safe drinking water.

"We are in close coordination with our country program director and are well positioned to act immediately with our treatment systems," says George Greene IV, president and chief operating officer of Water Mission. "Timing and assessment are critical, and with 40 employees in Haiti, Water Mission is prepared to serve the needs of people in the region and diminish potential health impacts that result from flooding. We ask for your prayers and encourage donations to make our work possible."

Donations are being accepted now to fund Water Mission's assessment of conditions in Haiti and

Cuba, and transport technical staff and equipment such as generators, water treatment systems and installation equipment to the most devastated areas. One hundred percent of donations will be restricted to Hurricane Matthew disaster response.

To donate or to learn more about Water Mission's Hurricane Matthew go to watermission.org.

NALC Disaster Response

NALC Disaster Response is responding to hurricane damage in North Carolina. Relief supplies have been shipped from the NALC Disaster Response warehouse in Ohio.

NALC members and congregations are asked to prepare flood buckets, health kits, and school kits to help with the response. Instructions for the buckets and kits are available on the NALC website under disaster response. They are also seeking donations of bottled water and non-perishable food.

Supplies should be brought to Holy Trinity Lutheran Church; 255 Morgan Street in Troutman, N.C.

Cash donations may be given online at the NALC website or sent to NALC Disaster Response; 2299 Palmer Drive, Suite 220; New Brighton, MN 55112-2202.

Stewardship materials available online

The North American Lutheran Church is offering tools designed to help congregations with their stewardship ministry.

A video from NALC Bishop John Bradosky introduces the stewardship theme, "Overflowing Generosity." The video and other program resources are available for download from the NALC website under the resources/stewardship tab.

This faithful, encouraging and inspiring video is suitable for introducing the theme to church councils, adult forums, congregational meetings, and any context where folks would like to know about Christian stewardship in general and stewardship in the NALC in particular.

Two printed resources are available for download:

- + The Overflowing Generosity Stewardship Process by Dr. Eugene Grimm
- + A four-part Bible study entitled *Overflowing Generosity* by Pastor Dona Johnson

It has been said that stewardship is far more about *faith-raising* than it is about fundraising. The primary purpose of a stewardship emphasis in our congregations is to help our members grow spiritually. As we grow spiritually, yes, we do discover the joy of giving and a serendipitous effect will be that the church will have more money with which to fulfill the mission and ministry to which Christ calls us.

The Pastor Is In

By Pastor Gregory Fryer

Tuesday, Oct. 4, was the debut of a little evangelism project at Immanuel Lutheran Church in New York City — located on the corner of 88th Street and Lexington Avenue.

Sometimes being “Mission Driven” means being willing to go outside the walls of the church building.

I received many quiet smiles from people walking by on their way to work as they recognized the scene from the Peanuts comic strip which featured Charlie Brown and Lucy.

Some people took a seat for serious conversation, about struggling children, fighting brothers, etc.

Some people dropped nickels in our jar although I tried to tell them that



Pastor Gregory Fryer of Immanuel Lutheran Church, an NALC congregation in New York City, offers pastoral counsel to commuters as a part of the congregation’s outreach to its community.



there was no need for that. Some people even insisted on giving dollars. (I got more than 20 dollars!)

One fellow said that it was nice that a pastor does not stay within the church but has come out onto the sidewalk.

One passerby took my photo for her father, who is a psychiatrist. She said that he would get a kick out of my version of Lucy’s booth.

We are combining my booth with our free coffee for passers-by on Tuesday mornings. We have the church open. People go in for prayer or simply to look around.

Faith is Made Whole in Community.

For more information about Immanuel Lutheran Church please visit www.immanuelnyc.org.

NALC internship sites needed

Congregations may serve the church by helping to train pastors

Internship is an integral and required component of preparation for ordained ministry in the North American Lutheran Church. That means that as much as one fourth of the total post-college training for ministry takes place among the people of God at a congregational internship site.

Internship is usually a full year of major and intensive involvement in a congregational ministry of the church and is a time of learning and serving on the part of the intern. It may occur during the third or fourth year of seminary training. Internship is intended as a time of pastoral development, which means that an intern is not only immersed in the multiple ministries of congregational ministry but also spends time analyzing, reflecting upon, and learning from all those involvements.

The need is great in our church for sites willing to host an intern. A congregation that commits to hosting an intern is providing an invaluable service to the NALC. That congregation is committing itself to assisting in the formation of the future pastors of this church. At the same time, the congregation receives the gifts of an intern in their parish.

The need is great because we are spread out throughout North America, and we seek to minister to our candidates seeking internship by paying attention to various needs such as geographics, a spouse's career, family concerns, or health issues.

Because of these variables and that the number of interns available each year varies, it is important for any congregation that applies for an intern to know that it may not receive one in any given year, or may wait some time for an intern. However, it is important that we have a variety of internship sites



that are open in any given year to host an intern.

We invite you to pray about becoming an internship site. We invite congregations to be open to serving our church in this very important ministry preparing future pastors of the NALC.

A congregation of the North American Lutheran Church interested in becoming an internship site contacts the Candidacy Committee internship coordinator.

The internship coordinator will provide three documents to a congregation: a) a summary manual on internship; b) an application for internship which includes information about the congregation and the clergy supervisor, and c) a guideline of the financial requirements for hosting an intern.

The completed application is filed with the internship coordinator. Filing the application means the congregation is committed to the financial obligations of internship and has a clergy supervisor in place. No congregation will be considered for an internship unless an application is on file.

Note: Usually the clergy supervisor is the pastor (or one of the pastors) of the congregation requesting to host an intern. There are occasions when the clergy supervisor may be a neighboring pastor who agrees to supervise the intern. In that instance the congregation contracts with the supervisor for his or her services.

If you have questions and want to explore this ministry please contact the Candidacy Committee internship coordinator, Pastor John D. Hopper at saljohnhopper@gmail.com or 763-595-1122.

Formation and Re-formation

Dear Disciples of Jesus throughout the North American Lutheran Church:

As we approach the 500th anniversary of the Reformation, I have been fascinated by the word “*reform*.” The dictionary defines it this way, “to change into an improved form or condition by removing faults or abuses; to put an end to an evil by enforcing or introducing a better method or course of action; to induce or cause to abandon evil ways.”

As we celebrate the Reformation and give thanks for the Reformers, it is easy for us to become confused in our thinking and assert that the work of reforming is what Christ calls *us* to do. However, that is contrary to the witness of the Word.

From the very beginning it is God who does the “forming.” “In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth. The earth was without *form* and void, and darkness was over the face of the deep” (*Genesis 1:1-2*). Out of the formless void God creates all there is.

The pinnacle of creation is the unique formation of man and woman. “Then the LORD God *formed* the man of dust from the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living soul” (*Genesis 2:7*).

In Martin Luther’s commentary on this text he reminds us that when God creates man He employs a new procedure. “He does not leave it to the earth to produce him, like the animals and the trees. But He Himself shapes him according to His image as if he were God’s partner and one who would enjoy God’s rest.” Luther uses the image of the potter who forms a pot out of the clay with his hands. The hands of God *form* us, and we bear the throw lines of the potter on our being.

For those of you who may be unfamiliar with “throw lines,” when a potter is shaping a pot the fingerprints of each potter produce unique tiny grooves in the pot as it spins under the pressure of his or her hands. These are called “throw lines.”



From the Bishop

Bishop John Bradosky

Our lives bear the “fingerprints” of the Creator. In addition, God takes this lifeless form, draws it close and breathes life into it. Luther writes, “Beyond all the other creatures man was made a living soul. God takes that clod and *forms* from it a most beautiful creature which has a share in immortality.” No other part of creation shares such an intimate relationship with the Creator.

Throughout the Psalms you will find similar words regarding our formation. “For you formed my inward parts; you knitted me together in my mother’s womb. I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made” (*Psalms 139:13-14*).

The Prophets offer similar reminders. “Thus says the LORD who made you, who *formed* you from the womb and will help you” (*Isaiah 44:2*). If the hands of God formed us, then re-formation can only come when the hands of God are on us. Reformation must include the intimate proximity of God and the breath of God in His Holy Spirit that gives life and brings new life.

In the New Testament there is another word for “formed” that has also captured my attention. Paul writes, “It is always good to be made much of for a good purpose, and not only when I am present with you, my little children, for whom I am again in the anguish of childbirth until Christ is *formed* in you!” (*Galatians 4:18-19*). The word in the Greek is *morphothe*. You will recognize a word more commonly used in our language, “morphed” or “metamorphosis.”

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Metamorphosis is defined as “the process of transformation from an immature form to an adult form in several distinct stages; a complete change in form or nature.”

Commenting on that Galatians text, Dietrich Bonhoeffer writes, “To be conformed to the image of Christ is not an ideal to be striven after. It is not as though we had to imitate Him as well as we could. We cannot transform ourselves into His image; it is rather the form of Christ, which seeks to be formed in us (*Galatians 4:19*), and to be manifested in us. Christ’s work in us is not finished until He has perfected His own *form* in us. We must be assimilated to the form of Christ in its entirety, the form of Christ incarnate, crucified and glorified.”

This forming is not our work but Christ at work in us. It is Christ who longs to get His hands on our life to *re-form* us, growing our immature faith into mature, adult faith. This is not accomplished by simply receiving information, engaging in positive thinking, pursuing moral perfection, supporting political agendas, or adopting any strategies that include even the slightest perception that we are capable of saving ourselves. Works righteousness takes many forms that oppose the Biblical proclamation of justification that we are saved by grace through faith in Jesus Christ.

Reformation must never become just a celebration of an historical event, but the nature of ministry in the daily life of the Body of Christ. This is the nature of discipleship — leading people to Christ (evangelism), growing people in Christian faith to full maturity (catechesis), applying the Christian faith in daily living (vocation), and living together in Christian community through responsible relationships of mutual accountability. This is Christ’s plan to *form* and *reform* all who follow Him even as He formed and reformed His first disciples.

Through the Incarnation, Jesus first broke into our world in His life, death and resurrection to get His hands on us to proclaim the “Kingdom of Heaven,” to redeem and save us from our sins, to conquer the power of evil and death, to give us eternal life, and to re-form and renew us through life in Christ. This is the Gospel we proclaim. It is the grace we receive through faith in Jesus Christ.

Formation and re-formation continue today as Jesus breaks into our lives through Word and Sacrament. Luther said, “The Word has feet, it runs after me. It has hands, it lays hold of me.” Through the Word, read and proclaimed, Jesus gets His hands on us, leading us to faith in Him, assuring us of forgiveness and eternal life. Through study, reflection and meditation on the Word, Christ gets His hands on us, renewing and re-directing our lives in the path of obedient, faithful living as His disciples.

In the Sacraments, Jesus also gets His hands on us and places Himself in our hands. In Baptism, hands are laid on the newly baptized. In private confession and absolution, hands are laid on persons confessing their sins. In confirmation, hands are laid on the confirmands. In ordination, hands are laid on the ordinand. In healing liturgies, hands are laid on the person seeking healing. Through these human hands and prayer, Christ Jesus confers His gracious presence and the power of His Holy Spirit.

Concerning the Eucharist, Luther writes, “The bread which Christ took and divided among his disciples He made His body, when He said, ‘This is my body.’ Christ’s real, natural body is present in the bread of the Supper in such a way that the form of the bread has now become, through His Word, Christ’s body. Certainly, then, Christ’s real body must be truly present where its form is, which has been made its form by the Word, out of the bread.”

In the same way the blood of Christ is truly present in the form of the wine, through the Word. Jesus said, “Drink of it all of you; this cup is the new covenant in My blood, which is shed for you and for all people, for the forgiveness of sins.” There are hands that place His body into our hands, hands that place the cup into our hands so that we may eat and drink the body and blood of Christ. In this way He breaks into our lives with forgiveness and new life and is at work conforming our lives to His. He is at work strengthening our faith and guiding our paths as His followers.

Finally, I share with you Luther’s words from my October 3 devotional reading in the book, *Faith Alone*. “Don’t picture Christ as a judge for whom

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you must do this or that to be reconciled. He is the Light of the World. Whoever follows Him will no longer walk in darkness. Christ says, 'If you feel your sin and admit it, and if you're terrified by it, then hold tightly to me, follow me, and believe in me.' Christ's words are similar to what a physician would say to a patient: 'I haven't come to poison you. I want to help you. If you follow my advice you won't need to worry. If you refuse my advice and call me a scoundrel, if you hate me and reject my medicine, then you are willfully sentencing yourself to death. Certainly I am not putting you to death. No, I'll have to let you die because you despise and reject my medicine.' How tragic and unnecessary when the 'medicine' He provides is ours in Word and Sacrament and faith in Him."

I must confess that I have an aversion to doctors unless my situation is desperate. I think I can diagnose myself and simply want my doctors to

give me what I think I need so I can heal myself. What I have discovered is that most good doctors don't trust my self-diagnosis. They want to get their hands on me so they can see for themselves what I need, conduct their own diagnosis and provide what I truly need for healing.

So, too, the Great Physician wants us to trust in Him completely and to give up our own self-diagnosis that so quickly engages in either self-justification — concluding that we are healthy and need no healing — or concludes that we are lost and condemned, without the possibility for healing. Christ comes to give us healing, new life, reforming and renewing us as He dwells in us.

As we celebrate the true nature of Reformation may the hands of the Lord be upon us and the presence of Christ in Word and Sacrament dwell within us, conforming our lives to His. This is where the Reformation began in the heart and life of Luther. So may it be for us!

NALC Pastors Conference is Feb. 14-16

The 2017 NALC Pastors Conference will be held Feb. 14-16 at the Crowne Plaza Universal Studios Hotel in Orlando, Fla.

The Rev. Dr. James Nestingen, noted Martin Luther scholar, will be the featured speaker. He will have two presentations on Luther's Doctrine of Vocation and two presentations on the lectionary preaching texts for Lent, Holy Week and Easter.

Bishop John Bradosky will lead a meeting of the NALC Ministerium and a worship service including the renewal of ordination vows and the blessing of anointing oil for use in congregations.

All congregational leaders and members are asked to support and encourage their pastor's participation in the annual NALC

Pastors Conference through council/congregational action and to provide financial support. Each congregation and pastor will benefit from full involvement in the NALC Ministerium.

Registration is \$100 per person until Dec. 31 and \$125 beginning Jan. 1. Registration includes breakfast and dinner on Wednesday and breakfast on Thursday.

A discounted hotel rate of \$120 per night is available at the hotel for rooms booked by Jan. 16. The discounted rate will be honored two days before and one day after the conference.

Clergy spouses, seminarians and non-NALC clergy are welcome to attend but must register to be included in the group meals.



James Nestingen

To register or for more information go to the NALC website — www.thenalc.org.

LCMS, LCC and NALC leaders release Joint Statement on Scripture

As an important step forward in the ongoing consultation between representatives of the Lutheran Church-Canada, The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod and the North American Lutheran Church, the participants who represented the three church bodies are releasing their joint statement on Holy Scripture, *“God’s Word forever shall abide:” A Guiding Statement on the Character and Proper Use of the Sacred Scriptures.*”

Representatives of the three Lutheran church bodies have been meeting twice a year since late 2011, with conversations focused on similarities and differences, as well as topics of common concern.

Discussion regularly addresses the challenge to marriage, sexuality, the sanctity of all human life and the challenge to religious liberty. From the beginning, however, the participants have been engaging in serious, in-depth conversation about the authority of Scripture which is foundational to the church bodies’ understandings of these other issues.

The two most recent consultations, Sept. 9-10, 2015, in St. Louis, and March 16-17, 2016, in Bradenton, Fla., resulted in the drafting of the common statement, understood as providing guidance to the participants in ongoing, future conversations. The introduction to the document states:

We confess that the Bible is God’s written Word as part and parcel of our deepest confession — that Jesus Christ is the very Son of God, God incarnate, “very God of very God” and the Savior and Redeemer of all humankind. We confess that the Bible is God’s Word because its entire message is focused on Jesus Christ and His saving work. He is the heart and center of Scripture and the key to its true meaning.

Topical sections of the statement address: How did the Bible Get Here; What Kind of Book is the Bible; Suitable Methodology of Interpretation; Proper Use of the Bible.

The statement is a reflection of the consensus of the participants and not an official document or doctrinal statement approved by any one of the three church bodies. It is intended to serve as a guideline for further joint study by the representatives and by other groups within the three denominations who are seeking to know more about each other. It is also hoped that it may help pastors and congregations seeking to know more about the confessional Lutheran understanding of the truth and authority of Scripture on which the LCMS, LCC and NALC are founded.

The statement concludes:

We rejoice in our consensus in these truths. We pray that our shared understanding will be a sure and solid foundation for us to address future conversations and discussions, both in matters of agreement and areas where we do not share a common teaching or practice.

Participants in the ongoing consultations between leaders of the LCMS, LCC and the North American Lutheran Church have been the Rev. Dr. Albert Collver III (LCMS), the Rev. Dr. Joel Lehenbauer (LCMS), the Rev. Larry Vogel (LCMS), the Rev. John Pless (LCMS), the Rev. (President) Robert Bugbee (LCC), the Rev. (Bishop) John Bradosky (NALC), the Rev. Mark Chavez (NALC), the Rev. Dr. Jim Nestingen (NALC), the Rev. Paull Spring (NALC) and the Rev. Dr. David Wendel (NALC).

The joint statement on Scripture is available on the NALC website under the educational resources link. The exact link is:
<http://thenalc.org/wp-content/uploads/Documents/Teaching%20Statements/LCC-LCMS-NALC-State-ment-on-Scripture-FINAL-2016-07-28.pdf>

‘Living and Growing in Kingdom of Jesus’ webinar training series

During the last two years, the NALC’s five church-wide mission teams have been working hard to be in touch with our Mission District deans, pastors, leaders and congregations throughout the NALC to find out what needs exist for our congregations.

In response to extensive data received, conversations and requests, a fall webinar series has been designed to provide the specific resources requested.

One of the underlying challenges articulated by nearly everyone is a contrast between what has been defined as “kingdom versus institutional” thinking.

It’s not a new challenge for humanity. Throughout Scripture, we read of God teaching His chosen people who He is, who we are, and what the cross and empty tomb say about our identity. (For more information on this focus from the 2016 NALC Convocation, please download the 2016 Mission Festival Booklet and view any of the teaching presented.)

Please join the Missions Office in these free presentations with a variety of experts. Because there is no one good time for all people, these webinars are presented on multiple days and times. For those who are unable to attend the webinar series live, recordings of the webinars are posted online on the NALC Network in the group named “Mission Driven.”

Visit: www.nalcnetwork.com to join for updates, access to handouts, and to provide feedback.

Here are the upcoming webinars and registration links:

Prayer and Renewal/Revival - Part 2

Oct. 24 at 7:30 p.m. ET - Panel Discussion
<http://bit.ly/2cjrklh>

Renewing the Church Through Senior Ministry: Grand-parenting as Discipleship

Nov. 3 - 7:30 p.m. ET - Gwynne Gonnerman
<http://bit.ly/1Umux8V>

Discipleship: Scriptural Teaching and Training

Nov. 9-10 - Pastor Gemechis Buba
Facebook Live from the NALC Deans’ Meeting
Times and connection information: TBA

Youth and Family Ministry - faithwebbing.com

Nov. 15 at 2 p.m. ET - Gary Pecuch
<http://bit.ly/2bGys2J>

Discipleship: Where the Rubber Meets the Road

Nov. 21 at 7:30 p.m. ET - Panel Discussion
<http://bit.ly/2bUHGTW>

Why Church Planting?

Dec. 7 at 11 a.m. ET - Pastor Gemechis Buba
<http://bit.ly/2bGwjxS>

Women of NALC consider revised Guidelines

Delegates to the 2016 Women of the NALC Annual Gathering voted to approve revisions to the WNALC Operational Guidelines.

The revised Guidelines have been submitted to women’s groups in NALC congregations for ratification.

The proposed Guidelines and voting instructions are available on the Women of the NALC website www.wnalc.org.

Votes must be submitted by Feb. 1

NALC Mission Finder resource

As you come to him, a living stone rejected by men but in the sight of God chosen and precious, you yourselves are being built up as a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.

— 1 Peter 2:4-5

The themes in 1 Peter 2:4-5 lift up the many times our Father calls us to be in community, and He 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, they were not sent alone. Jesus 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 relationship and building strategic mission networks.

We are Traditionally Grounded, which binds us to our brothers and sisters around the world, both today and in history.

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. Mission needs strategic mission networks.

One of the most requested resources in the NALC is housed in “Mission Finder,” which was launched in August during the Mission Festival portion of the 2016 NALC Convocation in Anaheim, Calif.

What is Mission Finder? The simple answer is: An organic way to allow resources and relationships to be in the hands of the people.

Mission Finder allows you to:



1. Search for short-term mission trips that you can join or support, or invite others to join in what your congregation has planned.
2. Find creative ideas for discipleship and mission.
3. Resource local, domestic, and global mission opportunities.
4. Access the data whenever and however you desire to filter or search.
5. Submit your congregation’s information in real time to resource mission networks.

With several months of experience under our belts, we have been able to tweak, update information, and make this resource more user friendly. Thanks to the gifts and talents of those in the NALC, there are also several “how to” videos that walk those who would like some additional assistance through using this resource step by step! To visit Mission Finder, go to www.nalcnetwork.com/missionfinder.

NALC Church Planting Conference

Church planting is a scary thing. Let's just admit it. And when you factor in the NALC's resolution to start 1517 churches by 2017, it becomes terrifying to most of us as we realize that this is not something the "national" church is going to do, but that we all are called to do together.

And perhaps this fear is justified, or at least understandable. Stepping out of the boat and trying something new? Having to give up the idea that you are not in control of everything? Well, that just lands you in good company: Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses, David, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Esther, Ruth, Mary, Joseph, Peter, Paul, and Timothy... to name a few people who found their lives upended by God's call to step out into what they each considered "the unknown." For as many times as God's Word tells us "not to be afraid," maybe God understands from our perspective that it can be a scary idea.

Yet there is a buzz across the NALC. At the NALC Convocations in Anaheim and Dallas, at our Mission Festivals, Deans' meetings, Mission District meetings, and in phone calls and emails, Lutherans — who aren't perhaps known for their "church planting fervor" — are having conversation after conversation about this very topic.

The conversation often begins with: "I know this sounds strange. I don't know anything about it. But I really feel the call to help start a church..."

As the people of God are diving deep into His Word, the same result is happening across the country and the joy of the Gospel has lit a fire deeply in the souls of so many. Not for fame or for the denomination's sake, or because people have suddenly run out of things to do and have a multitude of free time, but the call has come. God's Spirit is stirring the hearts of His people.

"I planted, Apollos watered, but God [all the while] was causing the growth. So neither is the one who plants nor waters anything, but [only] God who causes the growth. He who plants and he who waters are one [in importance and esteem, working



toward the same purpose]; but each will receive his own reward according to his own labor. For we are God's fellow workers [His servants working together]; you are God's cultivated field [His garden, His vineyard], God's building."

— 1 Corinthians 3:6-9 (AMP)

So if you have had these thoughts, questions, musings or your heart has wondered... you are not alone. Faith is made whole in community. You are invited to join Pastor Gemechis Buba, Pastor Trina Petersen, other incredible experts with real-life church planting experience, and the NALC Mission Teams for "Plant, Grow, Bloom — It's Not an Option." This Church Planting Conference will be held in Fayetteville (near Atlanta), Ga., beginning at 9 a.m. on Jan. 5 and concluding at 3:30 p.m. on Jan. 6. Come and join the conversation, help equip others, learn, grow, teach, share. For all of the details, please visit: <http://bit.ly/2d6Q1qt>.

NALC Life Conference

The North American Lutheran Church is planning a Life Conference for Thursday, Jan. 26, at Trinity Lutheran Church in Warrenton, Va. The annual March for Life in Washington, D.C., is on Jan. 27.

The conference will begin with lunch followed by two pro-life speakers and conclude with worship. Both clergy and laity are invited.

For more information about the event contact Pastor Dennis Di Mauro at 703-568-3346 or dennisdimauro@yahoo.com.

World Mission Prayer League is seeking new global workers

“Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.” — Matthew 28:19-20

The NALC is blessed by our ministry partnership with the World Mission Prayer League. The World Mission Prayer League (WMPL) has more than 100 global workers in 20 countries throughout the world, along with a team dedicated to supporting their work. WMPL serves as one of the NALC’s primary sending agencies for global workers.

Why does the World Mission Prayer League serve? “The love of God enables our service. Simply, we serve because of Jesus! The world is badly in need. So, just as Jesus came to set this world right, we respond to the commands of the Word of God and go to do likewise. Compassion demands our radical action. As Emil Brunner writes: ‘The church exists by mission, as a fire exists by burning.’ Where there is burning, there is fire. And where there is church — there is the mission of God.”

The question is, are you called to go? The call is not just for pastors, but also for teachers, carpenters, students, nurses, doctors, lawyers, plumbers, administrators, dentists, and construction workers. It is not simply about your profession or vocation. but whether you are called to share the Good News of Jesus Christ as a global worker.

While WMPL is committed to connecting people to their specific callings, there are several areas that are in desperate need of workers:

1. Ethiopia - Elementary school teacher.
2. East Asia - Teaching English.
3. Asia - Medical rotations, finance director, and university students.
4. Kenya - Nurses and pastors.



We ask you to prayerfully consider these areas of service and to share their availability with others who might feel a call. For more information, please contact the NALC Missions Office at jbrockman@thenalc.org or visit www.wmpl.org.

Not all are called as global workers, but we are all called to pray. Visit <https://wmpl.org/get-involved/> for more information on how to become a praying member of the World Mission Prayer League.

Information on the NALC’s global workers is available at <http://thenalc.org/global-workers/>.

NALC provides sample policies for congregations to protect religious liberty

In response to the U.S. Supreme Court decision on same-sex marriage, the NALC is providing resources to assist congregations. The resources are included in a single document, “Marriage Law and the Protection of Religious Liberty: Implications for Congregational Policies and Practices.” The document is available on the NALC website under [resources/educational](#).

Comforting the Afflicted

What is a Pastor and What is Pastoral Leadership?

“And which of you by being anxious can add one cubit to his span of life?” — Matthew 6:27

Recently I had the opportunity to join an adult Bible study class at St. John Lutheran Church in Boerne, Texas, as I was there for the installation of their new pastor. They were talking about the struggles and challenges that we face in our day and age.

There was a list of these concerns in the Bible study guide. The leader asked the folks to reflect on these concerns. I found it interesting that — almost to a person — they said anxiety was their greatest struggle, challenge and concern today. And for all the reasons you might expect.

Many said they had never experienced this before in their lives. But the lack of trust in the government, the reality of terrorism and violence, the concern over health care and health-care costs, together with illness, divorce, and increasing drug addiction — even in the smallest of rural towns — caused them to confess that they were truly anxious and anxious in a way most had never been before.

And as an assistant to our bishop, I find this surprising but also important information. Another reality that surprises us who serve the NALC is the level of conflict that exists currently between pastors and congregational leaders. Although the actual number of such situations is a small percentage of our congregations, in conversations with other denominational leaders, it seems we are not alone or unique. So we regularly ponder the question, “why so much tension and conflict between pastors and congregational leaders?”

I believe the Bible study class in Texas may give us a clue to understanding at least some of these conflict situations. It may be grounded in the reality that pastors see themselves as agents of change and change is often anxiety-producing. If pastors push for change within congregations already experiencing increased anxiety, it may be that the natural response of congregational leaders is that



Ministry Matters

Pastor David Wendel

Assistant to the Bishop
for Ministry and Ecumenism

of rejection, criticism and impatience with the pastor.

Although this is theory and conjecture, as I work with congregations experiencing such conflict, it is clear that often the negative reaction toward the pastor begins with changes being advocated or executed by the pastor. The reaction may appear irrational or unreasonable, given the proposed changes. Yet it is valuable for the pastor to be sensitive to the anxiety level of the congregation at any given time and to shape ministry accordingly. In short, it may be that we are currently in a time when it is important for pastors to “comfort the afflicted,” rather than “afflict the comfortable.”

It was in 1902 that this phrase was first coined by writer Finley Peter Dunne to describe the role of newspapers in society. Martin Marty, however, applied the phrase to God and Christian ministry — seeing God as both judging the comfortable and being merciful toward the afflicted.

Many pastors graduate from seminary thinking of our Lutheran congregations as comfortable and privileged so that we understand part of our task to be prophetic, wishing to “afflict the comfortable,” challenging folks to step out of their comfort level to love God and neighbor. And while that is still important, it may be time for pastors to realize that “comforting the afflicted” is our primary task at this time in human history.

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We pastors and preachers can be very adept at “afflicting the comfortable.” I wonder if we are equally competent comforting the afflicted. I wonder if some of us pastors are afflicting our congregations with additional anxiety at just the time when anxiety is already extremely high, creating conflict and tension — and at a time when what is needed for congregations are the words of our Lord and of Holy Scripture, communicating peace, promise, reassurance and hope.

There may be times when the trusted pastor pushes, and pushes hard for change, transformation, and movement forward within the congregation. However, pastors must be sensitive to the realities of life for the children of God within their care. In a time of great anxiety, the best a pastor can do is to provide love, pastoral support and stability, in the midst of doubt, fear, worry and concern.

Florida church hosts Martin Luther Center, Reformation artifacts

As we approach the 500th anniversary of the Protestant Reformation, many may be interested in the history of the Reformation.

The Martin Luther Center at First Evangelical Lutheran Church in West Palm Beach, Fla., is a museum created by Pastor Paul Arnold from First Evangelical Lutheran Church and includes more than 1,000 artifacts, historical documents, a large library, and art items.

Not everyone will have the opportunity to travel to Germany, but many people may visit Florida and may be interested in visiting the museum as a part of a trip to Florida.

The museum is located at 2740 Parker Avenue in West Palm Beach.



By Gary Pecuch

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.

A wide variety of resources are available on the faithwebbing.com site.

New link addition to the Website:
<http://www.kidskountpublishing.com>

Kids Kount Publishing is a ministry of King of Kings Lutheran Church, Omaha, Neb. (LCMS). You may know of them through Gwynne Gonnerman of India Transformed. Gwynne hosts a table in the vendor area of our NALC Gatherings. The website offers handbooks, build-it-yourself improvements and over 100 online training videos, and more. All for free!

The next faithwebbing.com webinar will be on Tuesday, Nov. 15 at 2 p.m. ET.

Webinar links and topics are sent out to all of those on the faithwebbing.com email distribution list and posted in the faithwebbing.com group page in the [nalcnetwork](http://nalcnetwork.com). Webinars are free of charge to all NALC congregations.

If you have an interest in receiving the updates contact us at faithwebbing@gmail.com or get connected through the [nalcnetwork](http://nalcnetwork.com/) at <http://nalcnetwork.com/>

Congregations seeking to call NALC pastors

The list of congregations seeking to call NALC pastors is available on the NALC website at thenalc.org/pastoral-vacancies.



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