

# NALC News

North American Lutheran Church

July 2017

## 2017 NALC Convocation to celebrate 500th anniversary of the Reformation

*Church leaders from Africa will be featured preachers*

The newly-elected leaders of the world's two largest Lutheran church bodies will be featured speakers at the 2017 NALC Convocation. "Holding Fast: Being Reformed" is the theme of the Convocation Aug. 9-11 in Nashville, Tenn.

The Rev. Yonas Yigezu, President of the Ethiopian Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus, will preach at the opening worship of the Convocation Mission Festival on Wednesday, Aug. 9. The EECMY is the largest Lutheran church in the world with 9 million members.

The Rt. Rev. Dr. Fredrick Onael Shoo, Presiding Bishop of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Tanzania, will be the preacher for a festival Communion service celebrating the 500th anniversary of the Reformation on Thursday. The ELCT is the second largest Lutheran church in the world with 6.5 million members.

Both men will be among the international church leaders participating in the annual Global Confessional and Missional Lutheran Forum held in conjunction with the NALC Convocation.

Keynote addresses on the significance of the Reformation will be made by NALC theologians the Rev. Dr. James Nestingen and the Rev. Dr. Nathan Howard Yoder. The Rev. Dr. Jared Wicks will offer "Reflections on Martin Luther from a Roman Catholic Perspective."

Global leaders also will be a part of the Convocation Mission Festival which will gather



*Yonas Yigezu*



*Fredrick Onael Shoo*

under the theme "Renewing Congregational Life through the Word of God."

The NALC Mission Festival will be the focus of the Convocation Wednesday afternoon and Thursday morning. The Mission Festival is designed to inspire and serve as a resource to congregations.

Keynote presentations for the Mission Festival will be made by Bishop John Bradosky; the Rev. Dr. Gemechis Buba, Assistant to the Bishop for Missions; and the Rev. Dr. Joseph Parsalaw of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Tanzania.

Mission Districts will gather on Wednesday evening for Bible study and business meetings.

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The Convocation is the annual gathering and business meeting of the NALC. The Convocation will elect members of the Executive Council and Court of Adjudication. The Convocation will also receive financial reports and consider budgets.

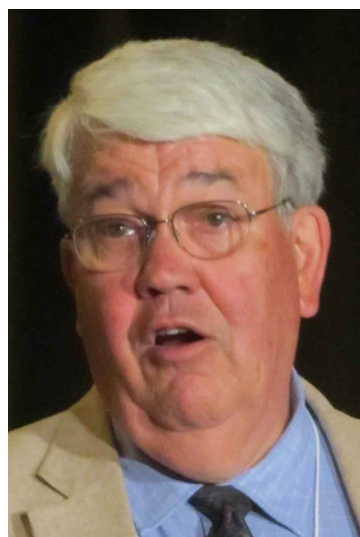
Changes to the process used to elect the Bishop will be considered by Convocation delegates. Constitutional amendments have been proposed by a task force which studied the election process.

Several speakers representing a variety of ministry partners will address the Convocation. Many ministries will also have displays at the Convocation. Reports will also be received from NALC staff.

Nothing is scheduled for Thursday evening to allow those attending the Convocation to experience the sights and sounds of Nashville.

The Convocation is scheduled to conclude at 5 p.m. Friday with the installation of the newly-elected officers.

The \$200 registration fee for the Convocation includes Wednesday dinner and lunch on Thursday and Friday.



**James Nestingen**



**Jared Wicks**



**Nathan Howard Yoder**

Reports to the Convocation from committees and staff as well as all documents pertaining to the Convocation will be available online at <https://thenalc.org/2017-lutheran-week>.

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

**The NALC Youth Leaders Symposium** will be held on Monday and Tuesday (Aug. 7-8). This training for all those who work with youth in congregations will be led by Gary and Laurie Pecuch of [faithwebbing.com](http://faithwebbing.com). The \$75 registration fee includes lunch on Monday.

**The Women of the NALC Annual Gathering** will be held on Tuesday, Aug. 8. The theme is "Being Reformed and Transformed." Featured speakers are Pastor Amy Little and Pastor Paula Murray. The \$80 registration fee includes lunch.

**The Carl E. Braaten and Robert D. Benne Lectures in Theology** are scheduled for Tuesday afternoon, Aug. 8, and Wednesday morning, Aug. 9. The \$125 registration fee for the lectures includes lunch on Wednesday.

To register or for more information on any of the events during Lutheran Week go to [thenalc.org](http://thenalc.org).





# Convocation to elect Executive Council, Court of Adjudication

The 2017 NALC Convocation will elect one pastor and one lay person to four-year terms on the Executive Council of the North American Lutheran Church.

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

Nominees for the lay position are Rebecka V. Andrae of St. Paul Lutheran Church in Latrobe, Pa.; Pamela Charas of Living Water Lutheran Church in Centerville, Ohio; and Brian E. Sutton of St. John's Evangelical Lutheran Church in Statesville, N.C.



*Rebecka Andrae*



*Pamela Charas*



*Brian Sutton*

Nominees for the clergy position are Pastor Mark Braaten of Our Saviour's Lutheran Church in Tyler, Texas; Pastor Roy Harrisville III of New Life Lutheran Church in Menomonie, Wis.; and Pastor Ralph W. Reitmeyer of St. James Evangelical Lutheran Church in Llano, Texas.



*Mark Braaten*



*Roy Harrisville*



*Ralph Reitmeyer*

Biographical information on the nominees is available on the NALC website at [thenalc.org/2017-lutheran-week](http://thenalc.org/2017-lutheran-week).

No additional nominations are possible at the Convocation.

## Court of Adjudication

Pastor Jeffray S. Greene of Word of God Lutheran Church in Peachtree City, Ga., and Lyle Hollander of St. John Lutheran Church in Boyden, Iowa, will be elected to four-year terms on the NALC Court of Adjudication. They are the only nominees for the two positions.

Biographical information on the nominees is available on the NALC website at [thenalc.org/2017-lutheran-week](http://thenalc.org/2017-lutheran-week).



*Jeffray Greene*



*Lyle Hollander*

# Changes to Bishop election process to be considered by Convocation

Changes to the process used to elect the Bishop of the North American Lutheran Church will be considered by the 2017 NALC Convocation.

A task force that has been studying the NALC's procedure for electing a bishop released a report and seven recommendations regarding changes in NALC election procedures. Three of the seven recommendations require amendments to the NALC Constitution.

The NALC Executive Council approved the amendments proposed by the task force and has forwarded them to the 2017 Convocation for consideration. If approved, the amendments would need to be ratified by NALC congregations.

The most significant change is the removal of language in the Constitution that allowed Convocation delegates to nominate a candidate for Bishop from the floor of the Convocation.

"We recommend that candidates for election to the office of Bishop be limited to those identified by the Nominating Committee; *i.e.* that the practice of allowing nominations from the floor of the Convocation be discontinued. This recommendation represents the majority opinion of the task force: four task force members supported the discontinuation of nominations from the floor; two members supported the current procedure which allows floor nominations," the task force's first recommendation states.

"There was a diversity of opinion within the task force, generating robust and respectful discussion and debate. While there were a variety of preferences as to electoral procedures, there was unanimity on the desire to discern God's choice in any election; and there was unanimous agreement that the Holy Spirit does not require any one particular procedure to successfully govern the church's deliberations, but is more than capable of using a variety of procedures to accomplish His will," the task force report states.

Pastor Carl Rasmussen of First Lutheran Church in Kirkland, Ill., chair of the task force, explained the rationale for discontinuing floor nominations for bishop: "The task force majority believes floor nominations give delegates insufficient time to pray and reflect about candidates so nominated; and may place lay delegates at a particular disadvantage, since lay members of the church have limited opportunity to become acquainted with NALC pastors other than their own."

Pastor Alden Towberman, of St. Mark Lutheran Church in Butler, Pa., was one of the task force members opposing the proposed change. He authored a minority report.

"Our present Constitution provides the greatest opportunity for good order and the work of the Holy Spirit to guide us, even in surprising ways that are consistent with the intent of Scripture, by providing for both nominations for the Office of Bishop to be received before and from the floor of the Convocation when an election is held," he wrote.

Amendments are also proposed changing the date when biographical information on the candidates for all offices must be made available to members of the NALC from 90 days to 60 days prior to the Convocation.

The last date for nominations for Executive Council and Court of Adjudication would change from 45 to 40 days before a Convocation. Bishop nominations would need to be submitted 60 days in advance with no additional nominations allowed.

The task force was the result of action by the 2015 NALC Convocation calling for a study of the Bishop election procedure. Three Mission District Deans and three members of the Executive Council were appointed to the task force by Bishop John Bradosky and the Executive Council.

The proposed amendments and related reports are available online at [thenalc.org/2017-lutheran-week](http://thenalc.org/2017-lutheran-week).

# Braaten-Benne Lectures in Theology

## *Savior and Lord: Lectures on the Work of Christ*

The theme of the 2017 Carl E. Braaten and Robert D. Benne Lectures in Theology is "Savior and Lord: Lectures on the Work of Christ." The annual theological conference, held prior to the NALC Convocation, is scheduled for Aug. 8-9 at the Sheraton Music City Hotel in Nashville, Tenn.

"Picking up from last year's well-received series on the person of Christ, this year's Braaten-Benne Lectures in Theology will invite attendees into a consideration of the inexhaustible riches of Christ's work. The canon of Scripture, the tradition of Christian thought, and Lutheranism's responsibility to the worldwide church will inform our presentations and discussions. Together we'll explore the creation-changing accomplishment of Jesus — the faithful, crucified, and risen God-man — from historical, systematic, and pastoral perspectives," explained the Rev. Dr. Amy Schiffrin, President of the North American Lutheran Seminary.

Featured speakers for the 2017 lectures are Dr. Don Collett, Dr. Gordon Isaac, Dr. Paul Hinlicky, Dr. David Luy, and Dr. David Yeago. Here are their lecture titles:

***Christ in the Psalms* - Dr. Don Collett**, Associate Professor of Old Testament at Trinity School for Ministry. Dr. Collett has his Ph.D. from the University of St. Andrews in Scotland.

***The Liberating Sacrifice: Dalferth, Augustine & Luther on the Saving Significance of Messiah's Cross* - Dr. Paul Hinlicky**, Tise Professor of Lutheran Studies at Roanoke College in Salem, Va., and author of several books, including *Luther and the Beloved Community: A Path for Christian Theology after Christendom*.

***Luther on Prayer, Meditation, and Spiritual Trial* - Dr. Gordon Isaac**, Berkshire Associate Professor of Advent Christian Studies and Dean of Chapel at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary and author of *Left Behind or Left Befuddled: The Subtle Dangers of Popularizing the End Times*.



*Don Collett*



*Paul Hinlicky*



*Gordon Isaac*



*David Luy*



*David Yeago*

***A Wondrous Strife: Luther's Baroque Soteriology* - Dr. David J. Luy**, Assistant Professor of Biblical and Systematic Theology at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School and author of *Dominus Mortis: Martin Luther on the Incorruptibility of God in Christ*.

***Life-Giving Flesh: Cyril of Alexandria on Incarnation and Redemption* - Dr. David Yeago**, Professor of Systematic Theology and Ethics for the North American Lutheran Seminary and Trinity School for Ministry and author of *The Apostolic Faith: A Catholic and Evangelical Introduction to Christian Theology*.

Registration for the lectures is \$125. You may register online at [www.thenalc.org](http://www.thenalc.org).



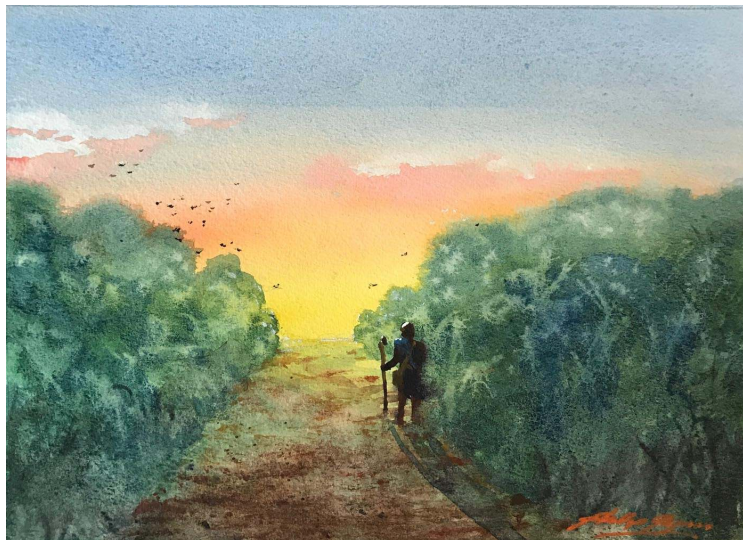
# ‘Moments of Mission’ artwork to be available at Convocation

Those who attend the 2017 NALC Convocation will have the opportunity to purchase artwork to support the NALC’s Great Commission Society.

Pastor Phillip Gagnon of St. Albert Lutheran Church in St. Albert, Alberta, has completed 12 “Moments of Mission” watercolor paintings as an effort to support the NALC’s mission work.

The paintings give glimpses of life and mission around the world, from Mexico to Tanzania and Ethiopia, intending to inspire hearts for mission.

The original art pieces, signed by the artist, will be framed and available for purchase. The artwork has also been incorporated into calendars and notecards which will be for sale.



All those attending Lutheran Week are encouraged to visit the “Moments of Mission” display to view these beautiful works of art and to consider purchasing the original works, calendars or notecards.

Proceeds from sale of the art will go to the Great Commission Society fund to support the NALC’s annual grant program which provides emergency or transitional aid for missions and global workers, as

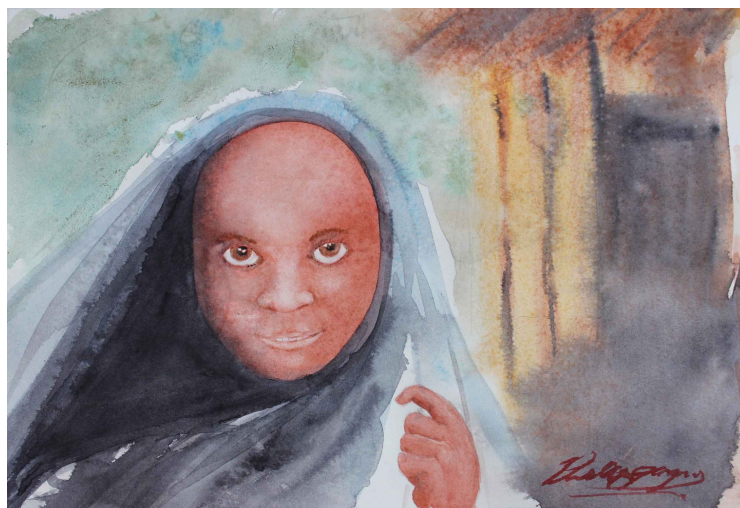


*Twelve “Moments of Mission” watercolor paintings were created by Pastor Phillip Gagnon in support of the NALC’s Great Commission Society.*

well as start-up funds for new mission starts in North America.

The Great Commission Society is a voluntary group of individuals who commit to monthly giving to support local mission congregations, our workers around the world, and anything and everything having to do with mission in the NALC.

You can learn more about the Great Commission Society online at [thenalc.org/gcs](http://thenalc.org/gcs).





# Mission update from the Panzos

Dear partners in mission:

First, we want to direct you to Psalm 105:1-4, which calls us to remember God's miracles in our work and lives.

It's been a while since our last correspondence, but we would like to assure you that work in the Democratic Republic of the Congo is going well, despite some challenges related to the Congolese economy. Your prayers and donations are at work. Praise be to God.

At the beginning of May, we traveled to the United States for our daughter Nicole's graduation. We were able to visit three of our partner churches (Hampton Presbyterian Church in Gibsonia, Pa.; Holy Trinity Lutheran Church in Abington, Pa.; and Black Forest Lutheran Church in Colorado Springs, Colo.)

We had good conversations with all the congregations and received insight regarding how



to better serve the needy and advance God's mission in the DRC. Two of the most crucial topics we discussed were providing a safe shelter for women who are victims of domestic violence and creating a small orphanage in the city of Boma for children involved in our program. Pray that God may guide our discernment.

After 15 days in the U.S., we returned to the DRC on May 20. The economic situation in the DRC is worsening, but, as we read Psalm 105, we are reminded that God is in control. In our return, we carried two suitcases filled with clothes and shoes donated by Black Forest Lutheran Church for local orphans and pastoral vestments donated for the Confessional Lutheran Church of the Congo.

Please continue to pray that God may strengthen the relationship between the NALC and the Confessional Lutheran Church of the Congo. Pray for the victims of domestic violence and sexual abuse, and for the abandoned and orphaned children. Pray for their physical and spiritual needs. God is doing amazing miracles through you for those in need.

We pray that God blesses you and that you have a blessed Pentecost season.

**Didi and Serafina Panzo**



# Temples and Priests

## *Before and after Christ's resurrection*

***This is the first in a series of articles on temples, priests and church buildings by Pastor Mark Chavez, NALC General Secretary.***

Everything changed with our Lord's resurrection, but I am not sure we realize how far reaching the changes are. For example, the design of most Christian church buildings is not all that different from the pattern of the Jerusalem temple. It is most obvious in cathedrals, but even small rural church buildings have the same basic pattern.

Likewise those who serve and worship in church buildings today often perceive priestly roles to be much the same as they were for priests in the Jerusalem temple. The common view in all churches is that priests (ordained pastors and ministers) are a select group of people who have more direct access to God's presence on earth, and most of the priestly responsibilities are not for lay people.

My description above applies to the western Church, and certainly to the Church in North America. Stating it provocatively, all the talk about the priesthood of all believers in Protestant churches ends up being just lip service. Church buildings are primary structures, not secondary. Often Christian congregations end up serving their buildings, rather than the buildings serving the congregations.

Prior to our Lord's resurrection, the Jerusalem temple was God's dwelling place on earth. It was the place where God was to be worshipped and glorified. It was the only place where all sacrifices were to be offered. Only the priests were allowed to offer the sacrifices to God. They would offer the sacrifices for the people and proclaim God's word of forgiveness.

A radical change took place on the day of Resurrection. Jesus spoke about the change before His death and resurrection. He had this conversation with the Samaritan woman at the well:

*The woman said to him, "Sir, I perceive that you are a prophet. Our fathers worshiped on this mountain, but you say that in Jerusalem is the place where*

*people ought to worship." Jesus said to her, "Woman, believe me, the hour is coming when neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem will you worship the Father. You worship what you do not know; we worship what we know, for salvation is from the Jews. But the hour is coming, and is now here, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for the Father is seeking such people to worship him. God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth." (John 4:19-24)*

Obviously, since the Resurrection there is no longer a single place or structure where the Father is to be worshiped. This much is a given. It's the rest of Jesus' words in this conversation and the implications of what he says, that are not always understood, appreciated and apparent in Christian churches.

Two things in particular stand out — there will no longer be a single dwelling place for God's presence on earth, and worship must be "in spirit and truth." More about that later, but the other thing Jesus said prior to his resurrection that signaled a radical shift happened after he drove the money-changers and merchants selling animals for sacrifices out of the temple:

*So the Jews said to him, "What sign do you show us for doing these things?" Jesus answered them, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up." The Jews then said, "It has taken forty-six years to build this temple, and will you raise it up in three days?" But he was speaking about the temple of his body. When therefore he was raised from the dead, his disciples remembered that he had said this, and they believed the Scripture and the word that Jesus had spoken. (John 2:18-22)*

After the resurrection, there is a new temple — Jesus' body. His body is the new dwelling place of the Father on earth. It completely does away with the old temples. However, now there is not just a new temple, but many temples. More about that, and the implications for church buildings and priests next month.



# NALC pastors provide leadership for Call to Love Conference

**By Pastor Tom Curry**

Seeing children as God sees them is quite the challenge for us all, but an even greater challenge in those parts of the world where the influence of Christianity has been very limited.

Even in Jesus' day, children were not viewed as having value. Jesus was quick to challenge such norms, and those following Jesus should also be quick to challenge cultural norms that demean children and treat them as anything less than having great value before God.

In 1998, Friends of Hope was formed to bring the love of Christ to children in developing nations, especially India. The organization has residential centers for the care of orphan and semi-orphan children in several places throughout India.

Pastor Amy Little of Trinity Lutheran Church in Monroeville, Ohio, Pastor Marcus Carlson of St. Mark's Lutheran Church in Auburn, Ind., and Pastor Tom and Rhonda Curry of Living Faith Lutheran Church in Wabash, Ind., traveled to Nepal to spend four days with the directors and administrators of all the Friends of Hope homes in India at the Call to Love Conference. The goal was to highlight the love of God for children.



***Pastor Amy Little of Trinity Lutheran Church in Monroeville, Ohio, teaches at the Call to Love Conference in Nepal.***

Pastor Little and Pastor Carlson provided 17 hours of training to 20 participants. The conference was held in a modern hotel in Biratnagar, Nepal, along the India-Nepal border.

Topics covered at the Call to Love Conference were the inner work of God in the human heart; the call to see children through the eyes of God; emotional needs of children; emotional development of children; loving the least among us; identifying the child in need of extra love and attention; discipline vs. abuse; discipline options; spiritual development of children and the power of parental love.

Friends of Hope sponsored the conference in partnership with Awakening Lives to World Missions.

***Pastor Tom Curry serves as pastor of Living Faith Lutheran Church in Wabash, Ind., and the Midwest Regional Director of Awakening Lives to World Missions. He is one of the founders of Friends of Hope.***

# Luther on the Christian life

Dear disciples of Christ Jesus,

In preparing for our time together in Nashville celebrating the 500th anniversary of the Reformation, I was captivated by Martin Luther's little work from 1520, "On Christian Freedom." (I make no apology for quoting him repeatedly.)

Luther penned these challenging words during a time of great conflict with the papacy. With clarity and simplicity Luther articulates the essence of Christian faith and life. Luther dedicated his words to the pope as a "token of peace and good hope." He calls Pope Leo X a "lamb in the midst of wolves" and "a Daniel among the lions." He sees the problems not with the Pope but with the structures and institutionalism surrounding him.

Luther begins this article by laying down the following proposition concerning spiritual liberty and servitude: "A Christian man is the most free lord of all, and subject to none; a Christian man is the most dutiful servant of all, and subject to everyone."

While they appear to be contradictory, they agree with the words of St. Paul who writes, "Though I am free from all men, yet have I made myself a servant to all" (*1 Corinthians 9:19*), and "Owe no man anything but to love one another" (*Romans 13:8*).

Luther understands the nature of love as Paul did: to offer oneself to the beloved out of a sense of duty and obedience. This is the nature of Christ's love. "Even Christ, though Lord of all things, was yet made of a woman; made under the law; at once free and a servant; at once in the form of God and in the form of a servant."

What is the most profound gifts that we have as Lutherans to offer the Church and the world as we celebrate this 500th anniversary of the Reformation?

It is the same gift Luther found that alone was necessary for life: justification and Christian liberty, the most Holy Word of God. It is through the Word of God that we come to know Jesus Christ who is the resurrection and the life. It is through the Word



*From the Bishop*

**Bishop John Bradosky**

and the Holy Spirit that we believe in him. As the Word proclaims, "If the Son makes you free, you will be free indeed" (*John 8:36*).

Luther writes, "The soul can do without everything except the Word of God, without which none at all of its wants are provided for. But, having the Word, it is rich and wants for nothing, since that is the word of life, of truth, of light, of peace, of justification, of salvation, of joy, of liberty, of wisdom, of virtue, of grace, of glory, and of every good thing.

"Thus the believing soul, by the pledge of its faith in Christ, becomes free from all sin, fearless of death, safe from hell, and endowed with the eternal righteousness, life, and salvation of its husband Christ. Thus he presents to himself a glorious bride, without spot or wrinkle, cleansing her with the washing of water by the word; that is, by faith in the word of life, righteousness, and salvation. Thus he betroths her unto himself in faithfulness, in righteousness, and in judgment, and in loving-kindness, and in mercies."

It is the power of the Gospel of Jesus Christ that brings us to faith in Christ, frees us from sin, death and the devil. It is through faith alone in Christ alone that we are justified and have all we need.

Luther clearly defends justification by faith in Christ alone apart from any works. Through faith in Christ we become a new person. Christ dwells in us. However, good works are needed and commanded for the sake of the "outward man."

***Continued on Page 11***



Luther writes, “Are we then to take our ease and do no works, content with faith?’ Not so, impious men, I reply; not so. That would indeed really be the case, if we were thoroughly and completely inner and spiritual persons; but that will not happen until the last day, when the dead shall be raised. As long as we live in the flesh, we are but beginning and making advances in that which shall be completed in a future life. ... To this part belongs the fact I have stated before: that the Christian is the servant of all and subject of all. For in that part in which he is free he does no works, but in that in which he is a servant he does all works.”

All the spiritual disciplines assist us in bringing our entire life into conformity and obedience to Christ and the Spirit and not rebelling against it. “For the inner man, being conformed to God and created after the image of God through faith, rejoices and delights itself in Christ, in whom such blessings have been conferred on it, and hence has only this task before it: to serve God with joy and for nought in free love.”

Luther makes it clear that a person is good, that is, justified, only through faith in Jesus Christ and only a good person can produce good works. “True, then, are these two sayings: ‘Good works do not make a good man, but a good man does good works;’ thus it is always necessary that the substance or person should be good before any good works can be done, and that good works should follow and proceed from a good person. As Christ says, ‘A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit’ (Matthew 7: 18).”

The works done by a person who does not believe in Christ are corrupt because the person is attempting to justify him or herself before God on the basis of his or her own good works. The good becomes evil because it is not love; it is self-serving.

True good works are also necessary because we do not live alone but in community. We do good works out of love for our neighbor. Luther contends that because of our faith in Christ we are free and bound to live our lives only for the sake of others and not for ourselves. Through faith in Christ we serve others more sincerely and more freely.

Luther writes, “Here is the truly Christian life, here is faith really working by love, when a man applies himself with joy and love to the works of that freest servitude in which he serves others voluntarily and for nought, himself abundantly satisfied in the fullness and riches of his own faith.”

Reflecting on Luther’s writing concerning Christian freedom and its impact on the Reformation, I am reminded that the external Reformation of the Church began in the internal reformation of Luther’s life through the life-transforming power of the Word of God.

This breakthrough into personal faith and freedom in Christ came through careful study and teaching of the Scripture. Luther’s major problem had been how to stand in holiness before a righteous, demanding God. That demand can only be satisfied by the grace that God alone provided in the life, death and resurrection of His only Son, Jesus Christ.

The full measure of justice is satisfied in this one redemptive gift for all time, for all people and for all sin. The sacrifice of our own life could not fulfill the justice or righteousness God deserves.

Through the Word, Luther came to the belief that a person can only stand before God through faith in Christ, his grace, his redemption and his salvation. Lifting up any of our feeble human works in comparison to what Christ has already accomplished for us in his mighty work on the cross seems more like rebellion than foolishness.

The joy and freedom of a Christian was that, in faith, one need not look to oneself, a broken sinner, but only to God’s mercy and goodness. It was this wonderful liberation and joy that Luther speaks of so passionately to Pope Leo in *The Freedom of a Christian*. It is this same gift delivered to us through the Word of God that we must offer to the Church and the world again, but not before it has worked its powerful transformation in our own lives as it did for Luther!

So may it be!

**Bishop John Bradosky**

# Stuff the truck for Disaster Response

Those attending the 2017 NALC Convocation and other Lutheran Week events in Nashville, Tenn., are encouraged to bring tangible gifts to help “stuff the truck” for NALC Disaster Response.

With current disaster response supplies depleted, tangible donations of quilts, flood buckets, health kits, school kits, layettes, Bibles, and gift cards from Lowe’s, Home Depot, Target and Walmart are urgently needed.

Donation boxes will be near the NALC Disaster Response and Women of the NALC display tables. A truck will bring them to the disaster warehouse in Caldwell, Ohio.

A brochure for your congregation that may be printed or emailed is available at [www.thenalc.org](http://www.thenalc.org). For more information, please contact Mary Bates, NALC Disaster Coordinator, at 740-509-1132 or [disasterresponse@thenalc.org](mailto:disasterresponse@thenalc.org).

## Mission Office Update

The North American Lutheran Church has four core values, one of them being Mission Driven. *Driven* is a dynamic word describing movement, activity, duty and mobility. That description suits the NALC well. We are Mission Driven. We are centered in Christ. We are grounded in tradition. We are focused on congregations, and we are driven with the mission of making disciples of all nations.

An update can be found below on a few resources designed as practical tools to assist our congregations, leaders, and members on the journey of life to life discipleship and mission.

**Moments of Mission:** Original Artwork, Calendars, and Note cards will be available at this year’s Lutheran Week: <http://bit.ly/2tMV5qo>

**NALC Senior Ministry Conference:** A Senior Ministry Conference will be held Oct. 17-18. For more information, please visit: <http://bit.ly/2tblAbe>

**Volunteers for the Mission Festival:** Calling all servants! We are looking for a few additional volunteers who plan to attend Lutheran Week and are willing to assist with a welcome table, general administrative tasks, or serve as needed with a smile. If you are interested or available, please contact Jenny Brockman at [jbrockman@thenalc.org](mailto:jbrockman@thenalc.org) for more details!

**Fall Webinar Series:** We are excited to announce that the Rev. Dr. Jim Nestingen will be hosting a monthly webinar series this fall focusing on “Renewing Congregations through the Word of God.” Stay tuned for more details!



Lutheran Week is fast approaching and Gary and Laurie will be in Nashville for the annual event.

They will be facilitating the **Ventures in Youth Ministry Faith Formation Symposium**. The Symposium is for adults who work with youth and will be held Monday morning Aug. 7 through Tuesday noon Aug. 8. You can register through the NALC website in conjunction with the Convocation. The hope is to have all Mission Districts represented.

Gary and Laurie will also be hosting a table in the exhibit area as well as leading a workshop. Lutheran Week is a great opportunity to have a chat with them about your specific congregation.

***Gary and Laurie Pecuch have served in youth ministry for more than 35 years at St. John’s Lutheran Church in Grove City, Ohio. They serve the NALC as youth ministry coaches and provide a variety of resources for NALC congregations free of charge through their website. Visit [faithwebbing.com](http://faithwebbing.com) or contact them at [faithwebbing@gmail.com](mailto:faithwebbing@gmail.com).***



# Is your congregation stagnant and in decline?

*Welcome to Life-to-Life Discipleship - Jesus' intention for renewal and re-formation*

*This life is not righteousness, but growth in righteousness; not health, but healing, not being but becoming; not rest, but exercise; we are not yet what we will be, but we are growing toward it; the process is not yet finished, but it is going on; this is not the end but it is the road; all does not gleam with glory, but all is being purified. — “An Argument in Defense of All the Articles of Dr. Martin Luther Wrongly Condemned,” Martin Luther, 1521*

In conversations with NALC congregations, councils and call committees, it is obvious that one of their greatest challenges is stagnation and decline. It is common for call committees to be looking for their next pastor to be one who has just the right new idea or program “solution” to their situation so that the new pastor will lead them into a golden era of growth, financial stability and excitement. Often this is fueled by the expressed need to have more members to relieve the burden of current burned-out members, share the responsibility for upkeep and maintenance of the church institution, and provide increased income to pay the bills and keep the doors open!

While we realize the challenges congregations are facing today, expecting that a pastor — “new” or “old” — will be able to provide some silver bullet to stop the decline and end the stagnation is misguided and places unrealistic expectations upon pastors, as well as congregational leaders. I shudder when I hear that call committees are interviewing potential pastors with an eye toward finding a “savior” who will “help us get new members to turn things around.”

Don't misunderstand. We share the goal of proclaiming the Gospel, reaching the unchurched, and having congregations that are growing in faith and numbers. But having this as a goal to relieve burdened and tapped-out current members, or wanting new members to simply help support the church as a viable social organization misses the



## *Ministry Matters*

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reason for the existence of the Body of Christ in the first place, and dooms the struggling congregation to frustration, further burnout and continuing decline.

What is tragic about this reality is that the NALC is addressing congregational and pastoral decline and burnout — but most of our congregations and pastors have no clue what we are about! Many of our congregations and pastors have not heard of NALC Life-to-Life Discipleship!

Have you heard, for example, that we have an NALC Life-to-Life Discipleship Leadership Team? Have you checked out the NALC website and the video and resources related to discipleship and disciple-making? Do you have any idea what we mean in the NALC when we say, “Life-to-Life Discipleship?”

One of the questions in the NALC *Congregational Workshop in Preparation for the Call Process* asks: “The NALC is committed to moving away from an institutional understanding of the Church, to the biblical commission to be a community of followers of Jesus who focus on being disciples and making disciples. Which best describes your understanding of this movement? *Totally unaware. Have heard about it. Have been involved personally. Some in the congregation are involved, some aren't. Congregation understands, is on-board and involved.*”

Most congregations answer, “Totally unaware.”

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In the recent meeting of the NALC Life-to-Life Discipleship Leadership team, we discussed the need to inform all of our pastors and congregations about Life-to-Life Discipleship. We discussed the need to have enough NALC congregations and pastors involved so that we get to the “tipping point” where involvement increases organically with the goal that ultimately, all have the opportunity to be involved.

Why is it important that congregations and pastors be involved?

At its core, Life-to-Life Discipleship is about movement! The Christian life is not about stagnation and it’s certainly not about decline!

Martin Luther talks about this in the quote above, where he says the Christian life is not about “being, but becoming; we are not yet what we shall be, but we are growing toward it ...” Baptism is not about having arrived at the Christ-like life — it is about beginning the life shaped and formed in Christ, which is completed when we are raised to new life in him after death.

Being a disciple of Jesus Christ is about movement. A pastor who is exhausted, frustrated and feeling trapped will not be able to lead the flock forward in faith. A congregation that is burned out and “stuck” will not grow in faith or numbers, having fallen into a mindset of simply wanting to maintain the church as institution, service organization, or social club existing for the fellowship and fun of its current members.

What is Life-to-Life Discipleship? First, it is taking our “marching orders” from our Lord in his Great Commission, when he commands, “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” (*Matthew 28:19-20*). Because we are committed to being disciples and making disciples, we look to Jesus to see what disciple-making is all about — and we see that it is about investing in others, life to life — person to person.

Life-to-Life Discipleship is “incarnational.” God became human, took on flesh and blood, in His only-begotten Son, Jesus Christ, to dwell among us full of grace and truth (*John 1:14*). Jesus promised to be with us where two or three are gathered in His name (*Matthew 18:20*). As our Lord is extending the Great Commission, he promises, “And lo, I am with you always.” Jesus comes to us today through the means of grace — Word and Sacrament — to be truly present. As Christ is with us, we seek to be with others. Life-to-Life Discipleship, then, is about pastors investing in other pastors, pastors investing in individuals in their congregations, individual disciples in the congregation investing in the lives of others, whether in the congregation, in their home or family, in their neighborhood, friendships or acquaintances.

As our Lord gave himself for our sake, we give ourselves for others. As Jesus is with us always, emptying himself to walk alongside us through life, we respond by walking alongside others. This is Life-to-Life Discipleship and disciple-making. It’s about loving others as Christ loves us, caring for others so that we do not see people as “potential church members” able to help us pay for the roof, cover the bills, maintain the organization. Rather, we see every person we meet as a child of God, redeemed by Christ, worthy of our time, energy and effort.

Jesus made disciples by calling people to follow and then walking alongside them. We make disciples when we introduce them to Jesus, and then walk with them in good times and bad, in joys and sorrows as, together, we seek to follow Jesus.

Second, Life-to-Life Discipleship is about being people and a community in the NALC committed to and immersed in the Word of God. It’s interesting that every congregation in the NALC joined the NALC because of our shared commitment to the truth and authority of God’s Word, yet by and large, Lutherans are unfamiliar with Scripture. Many continue to think that reading the Bible is difficult and confusing, so the family Bible remains on a shelf collecting dust.

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There would have been no Reformation 500 years ago were it not for the Word of God and Martin Luther's commitment to the truth of that Word! In his famous words, Luther said, "My conscience is captive to the *Word of God!*" Most Lutherans today are not familiar enough with the Word of God to live by it, let alone be captive to it. We need a reformation, today, in Lutheranism — and it will begin by a renewal of the Word of God in our lives and in our congregations! Life-to-Life Discipleship is about inviting more and more of our pastors and members into a relationship with Jesus Christ that is immersed in, shaped by, and living the Word of God as it comes to us in the Bible. Being a disciple of Jesus is about responding to his presence in our lives, knowing him, following him, hearing his words, obeying his words as we seek to live Christ-like lives.

How can we live a Christ-like life when we don't know Holy Scripture? Congregations and pastors who are reading, studying and engaging in deep and prayerful interaction with God and his Word grow as disciples of Jesus. As disciples of Jesus, they will want to walk alongside others in love and care. A congregation filled with people who are in God's Word and seeking to obey all that Jesus has commanded us (*Matthew 28:20*) will find that new disciples are being welcomed into their midst.

Today people outside the church are not interested, generally, in joining another organization. They *are* drawn to the community of disciples who are following Jesus, committed to God's Word and seeking to lead faithful, prayerful lives. That's what the Church is to be — and is called to be today — a community where, through Word and Sacrament, disciples are being fed and nourished for the Christ-like life, as new disciples are coming to Christ through life-to-life relationships with other followers of Jesus.

What does this look like in congregations?

Without going into great detail, the NALC Life-to-Life Discipleship initiative encourages pastors to be involved in discipleship coaching that helps them to

reflect upon and assess their lives and ministries, setting goals that help them move forward intentionally and with accountability. Does your pastor seem stuck, stagnant, burned-out, and unhealthy? Encourage your pastor to contact a member of the Life-to-Life Discipleship leadership team to learn more, find a coach and begin a discipleship coaching relationship. The "Core Four" coaching focuses the pastor on four important areas: Life Plan, Vision Plan, Ministry Plan and Priority Management. Pastors once again experience "movement" in life, vision and ministry, developing passion and excitement for ministry.

Congregationally, the Life-to-Life Discipleship initiative focuses on "Growing intentional Disciple-making Cultures (GiDC). This is a three-year training agreement that helps congregations develop and sustain a plan to equip leaders and members in being disciples and making disciples, as commanded in the Great Commission (*Matthew 28:19-20*), with the long-term goal of helping every person mature as a disciple of Jesus (*Colossians 1:28-29*). Simply put, it begins by training the pastor and key persons to be a leadership core, which then assists the congregation in developing a discipleship culture, which finally sends disciples out into the world to make new disciples. It is the Great Commission plan of our Lord! It's not something "new and improved" but a process that is tried and true. It is "back to the basics." It is getting to the essence of what it means to be the Body of Christ!

The strategy is for every pastor, every seminarian, every congregation and every person in the NALC to be involved in Life-to-Life Discipleship! It is the goal and aim of the NALC, as we seek to be responding to our Lord's Great Commission. We invite you to be informed and involved! Life-to-Life Discipleship may very well transform the life of your congregation and your pastor!

For more information, please contact a member of the Life-to-Life Discipleship Leadership team, chaired by Pastor Eric Riesen, secretary Pastor Tom Brodbeck. Team members and contact email may be found on the NALC website.



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