

NALC News

North American Lutheran Church

May 2017

Nominees for NALC Executive Council

Three pastors and three lay people have been nominated for the Executive Council of the North American Lutheran Church. The 2017 NALC Convocation Aug. 9-11 in Nashville, Tenn., will elect one pastor and one lay person to four-year terms on the council.

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

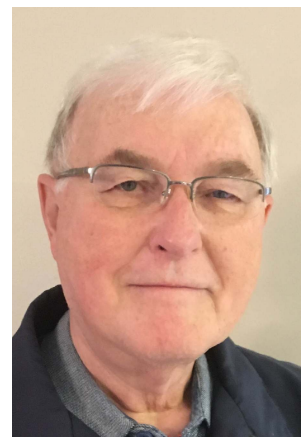
Pastor Jeffray S. Greene of Word of God Lutheran Church in Peachtree City, Ga., and Lyle Hollander of St. John Lutheran Church in Boyden, Iowa, have been nominated for four-year terms on the NALC Court of Adjudication. Two people will be elected.

Biographical information on the nominees is available as a supplement to the *NALC News* at thenalc.org/newsletter.

Additional nominations are still possible for both Executive Council and Court of Adjudication. Three or more delegates representing at least three congregations may together submit additional nominations. Such nominations should be submitted to the Nominating Committee no later than June 19.



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. 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.

North American Lutheran Seminary celebrates four new graduates

The North American Lutheran Seminary will celebrate the graduation of four more students on May 13.

Some of these students are the first to complete their entire degree at the NALS on the campus of Trinity School for Ministry in Ambridge, Pa.

The Commencement ceremony will take place at 10 a.m. ET Saturday, May 13. The speaker will be Archbishop Emeritus Robert Duncan of the Anglican Church in North America.

NALC Bishop John Bradosky will be the speaker for the Baccalaureate service at 5 p.m. Friday, May 12. Both Baccalaureate and Commencement are at St. Stephen's Church in Sewickley, Pa.

Students from the North American Lutheran Seminary and Trinity School for Ministry will participate in both Baccalaureate and Commencement. These services are open to the public.

The following students will be receiving Master of Divinity degrees from both the NALS and Trinity School for Ministry:

+ Gary Braeuer of St. Albert Evangelical Lutheran Church, St. Albert, Alberta.

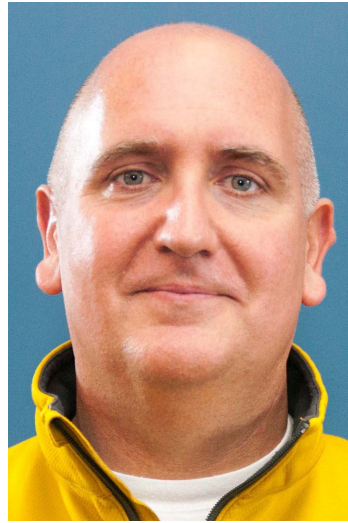
+ Makayla Cook of St. John Lutheran Church, Boerne, Texas.

+ Caleb Douglas of Holy Trinity Lutheran Church, Abington, Pa.

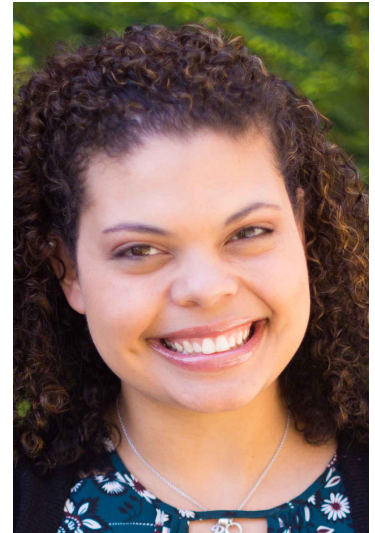
+ Matthew Vatalare of St. Timothy Lutheran Church, Charleston, W.Va.

We ask that you keep these students and their families in prayer as they go forth in their ministries.

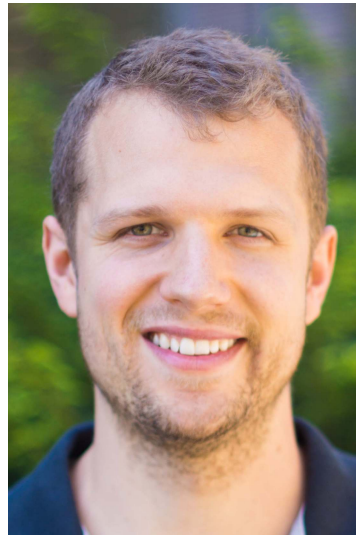
May is Seminary Month for the NALC. As our students prepare to go out into the harvest, we



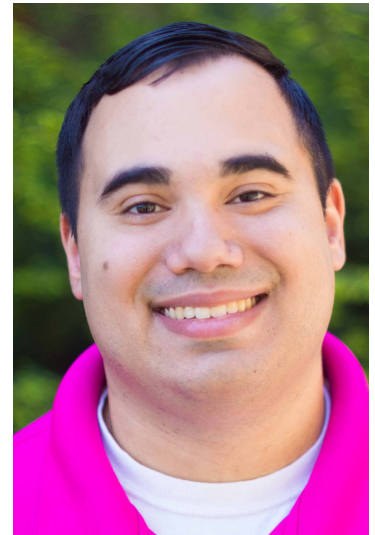
Gary Braeuer



Makayla Cook



Caleb Douglas



Matthew Vatalare

graciously ask that you consider supporting our continued efforts to form pastors and leaders for the NALC. We are grateful for our partners and blessed by their continued prayer and financial support.

Gifts to support the seminary may be given online at thenals.org or sent to:

NALC Theological Education Fund
2299 Palmer Drive, Suite 220
New Brighton, MN 55112-2202

NALC launches Holy Families! initiative

The North American Lutheran Church has launched its Holy Families! initiative. Holy Families! offers discipleship resources for families to use at home.

Holy Families! is a part of the NALC's observance of the 500th anniversary of the Reformation — noting the significant contribution of Martin Luther and the Reformation to nurturing faith in the Christian home. The Thrivent Foundation provided a generous grant to make Holy Families! possible.

Produced by Sola Publishing, this special initiative includes a number of Lutheran discipleship resources for families and congregations, including:

Holy Families! Website

The centerpiece of the Holy Families! initiative is the website — www.holyfamilytime.com — featuring a host of resources to aid in promoting discipleship in the home. Included are online materials, downloadable PDF documents, prayers, educational videos, as well as a daily devotional resource for use by parents and children.

Accessible through computer, phone, and tablet, the “Holy Family Time” daily devotional is freely available to the public. The hope is that this website will serve as a gift to enrich the lives of families throughout the world.

The Holy Family Time devotional was written with these key emphases in mind:

1. Solid Biblical Content.
2. Child- and Family-Friendly Readings.
3. Lutheran Theological Perspective.
4. Questions Asked by the Children.
5. Employing Luther's Three-fold Approach to Scripture: Prayer, Study, and Struggle.

“In the Luther Household” Bible Study

“In the Luther Household,” is a printed Bible study based in the NALC's biblical, confessional, traditional understanding of marriage and family. A free copy of the student book and leader guide was sent to every NALC congregation in April. The study can be ordered through Sola Publishing.



Video Study for Christian Parents

“Living as Holy Families” is an online video study by Pastor Marcus Carlson in the form of six videos and downloadable study and leader's guides. These resources were written to equip parents to be the first teachers of the Christian faith in their homes, and are freely accessible on the [hollyfamilytime.com](http://www.holyfamilytime.com) website.

“Our sincerest hope is that the Holy Families! initiative will foster lasting, significant change in the life and witness of Lutheran families and their congregations, both within and beyond the North American Lutheran Church,” said Pastor Steven E. King, Managing Editor of Sola Publishing.

“We give thanks for the Thrivent Foundation grant that made this work possible and to the NALC for entrusting Sola with the development and execution of the initiative on the Church's behalf,” Pastor King said. “Much work has gone into making this project a reality, and I am personally thankful for all the members of the Sola staff who have been involved.”

“We greatly value the collaborative relationship we have with the NALC and hope to be able to continue as partners with you in providing resources that reflect the integrity of the Word of God and the Lutheran Confessions,” Pastor King said.

For more information visit www.holyfamilytime.com.

Christ is Lord Ministries - Jamaica

By Pastors Divaker and Salome Pathak

Christ is Lord Ministries, an NALC mission congregation located in Columbus, Ohio, began a new mission outreach in Jamaica in 2008.

Two apartments, as well as a community clinic, were constructed for missionaries. CILM-Jamaica worked with a local nurse's aide to read blood pressure and blood glucose levels of the people in the area.

However, due to personal health issues, the nurse's aide could not continue, so our daughters, who have completed health education courses, are currently taking the readings. There has been a wonderful response from the community, because it is difficult to travel to a doctor's office for these readings.

In 2016, Pastor Salome took a job and became a tent-maker to assist in supporting the ministry.

In January 2017, Pastors Salome and Divaker traveled to Jamaica to begin building a chapel, a pastor's office, a choir room and a community gathering area; the construction work is ongoing. Pastor Divaker returned to the United States, while Pastor Salome is continuing the work in Jamaica.

We have had a wonderful response from the community once again. They wanted to know when worship was going to begin, so Pastor Salome held the first Sunday service on April 2 in the area where the community clinic is located. One person has since committed to serve with us.



We sent one carton with hymnals, Bibles and elementary school books to Jamaica.

We are purchasing some laptops and are planning to start a library and classes in computer literacy and for a certificate similar to a GED. Our current challenge is obtaining an Internet connection. We need to build a tower at least 40 feet high, since the location currently does not have reception.

For more information or to adopt Christ is Lord Ministries, please visit <http://thenalc.org/gcs>.



Three Conversions

One family's journey of stewardship

By Pastor Cathi Braasch

It's been said that three conversions are necessary in the Christian life: The conversion of the head, the heart, and the pocketbook. Truth be told, quipped Luther, these conversions don't all happen at the same time. Truer still: The last conversion in the list, the pocketbook, is probably the toughest.

My house has known these truths all too well.

Very early in our nearly 50 years of marriage, my late husband and I were like many other young Christian couples. We loved the Lord, wanted Him at the center of our home, yet we were not putting the Lord at the center in all things, particularly our finances.

Case in point: Much of the time, we were just flat out cash-poor. Not because of extravagance — we didn't have much — but more out of poor planning and prioritization of what we did have.

Starting a family business in a time of economic recession and double-digit interest rates did teach us how to squeeze a nickel out of a penny, how to put off 'til tomorrow, day after day. And, more than once we would get to the first day of the week without even a dollar or two to spare for an offering at worship. Embarrassed, we simply stayed home on those Sundays.

What changed this dismal situation? Well, I assure you, it did not start with our purses and wallets opening up suddenly!

The conversion of heart and mind that led to conversion of our pocketbook started in a Bible study group in our half of a little two-point rural Montana mission parish in the 1970s.



Pastor Cathi and Red Braasch and their Godchild, Raina Elizabeth Nelson, on day of her baptism.

There we were — a bunch of singles and married couples, probably 20-25 percent of the worshipping congregation on any given Sunday. We studied Scripture. We talked about what it meant to live for Christ and share Him with our friends and coworkers.

We prayed. Eventually, we found the honesty and trust needed to open up about the hard parts of the Christ-life, even things like finances.

The group discovered that we had two things in common: Our failure to put Christ first in our finances, and our embarrassment about it.

Thus convicted and convinced by God's Law and refreshed by the Gospel, we decided to work toward becoming better stewards and, eventually, tithers. It was time to put the Lord first, rather than in the leftover column.

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Our agreement and our plan: Figure out what a tithe would be for each of our households, compare that amount to our current giving, and gradually close the gap by increasing our giving by either a fixed dollar amount or a percentage each month.

It worked. By the end of that year we were tithing. And, as we discovered, we were doing much better with the overall stewardship of our finances. The remaining 90 percent was enough for our needs. In some cases, we found our resources going further than before, because our overall stewardship improved.

In my household, this was no small miracle. Because of a dismal year in the family business, our adjusted gross income was hovering around the federal poverty level during the year that we moved to becoming tithers.

During this time, God provided in ways we could not imagine, changing our hearts and minds along with our financial stewardship.

Even more, we were all able to talk more comfortably about the joy of being generous, for Christ's sake, with others in the congregation. When the opportunity came to call a vicar and explore two new worshiping communities in little towns some 50-75 miles away, our half of the two-point parish responded to the call. In our small congregation there was more than enough prayer, presence, and extra-mile giving beyond the tithe. Fifteen months after starting the preaching points, we ended up with *two* two-point congregations able to call pastors and grow in mission and ministry to these rural areas of Montana.

Putting the Lord first in all things, and teaching our daughter to do the same, became a joyous way of life in Christ. In the decades to come, the lessons of conversion — heart, mind and purse — became part of our family's heritage.

We continued to live simply — simply putting the Lord first and learning to be better and better stewards for His sake. Together, we knew times of plenty and times of having to start over. If our light shone more brightly for Christ because of it, then give glory to our Father in heaven.

In our house, living generously began with *recognizing* our Lord's lavish, life-giving love for us, *responding* with joy and thanksgiving as faithful stewards of all His gifts, and *being readied* by the Holy Spirit for whatever might come our way.

This past year has brought to mind those early faith lessons learned in times with the holy community around prayer, Scripture and true friendship in Christ. 2016 was the year in which my husband and I rewrote our wills, knowing that our only child was dying and that we'd soon have no heirs. Little did we know that in just under three months after our daughter passed away, her daddy — my husband of nearly 50 years — would suddenly die.

I say now, with tears of joy and thanksgiving as I write, that revising our wills — going over new ways to be thankful, generous and faithful in death as in married life — made for some of the most enduring memories of our family's life in Christ.

The stewardship lessons our Bible study group learned back in the day can be yours as well.

The NALC Stewardship Task Force is currently preparing the next edition of study materials to encourage thankful, generous, faithful stewardship of our time, talent, treasure and testimony. Watch for more about these resources in future editions of this newsletter and at the 2017 NALC Convocation in Nashville.

Those early days have long passed, but the conversion of heart, mind and pocketbook continues.

As for my household, now a household of one with memories of two dear ones in the arms of Jesus, the seasons of life have changed. Stewardship, however, never goes out of season. So may it be for your houses and holy communities, as you discover and share the overflowing generosity that comes from our God, the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Amen.

Pastor Cathi Braasch represents the North American Lutheran Seminary Board of Regents on the NALS Stewardship Task Force. A retired parish pastor and rancher, she will begin her sixth interim pastorate since 2011 among God's people of Grace Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jackson Center, Ohio.

Jesus goes ahead of us

Christ is risen!
He is risen indeed! Alleluia!

Dear Friends,

Easter is not just a day, but also a season — at the very center of the Church year and our life together in Christ.

The post-resurrection appearances of Jesus in the Gospels occupy our proclamation. In the midst of life's tragedies, disappointments, and our own failures, the pursuit of hope that endures can often seem like an empty word of encouragement. We need more than just words. We need to relate to someone who has already been where we are.

I take great consolation in the words of Mark's Easter Gospel reading. The angel tells the women, "Don't be alarmed. You are looking for Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified. He has risen! He is not here. See the place where they laid him. But go; tell his disciples and Peter, He is going ahead of you into Galilee. There you will see him just as He told you" (*Mark 16:6-7*).

Jesus has gone ahead of us.

The good news of Easter begins with men and women huddled in fear. Some of the women have gone to finish the job of embalming the body of their friend. Their only conversation is a question of who will roll away the stone. It was a day filled with fear, loss and grief. The day began with people dealing with their disappointments and unmet expectations. It is just at that point that the Gospel of Jesus breaks in with the assurance that He is already ahead of them — not just in their past, but in their future.

In the midst of our disappointments and unmet expectations, we need comfort. The disciples needed comfort. The world needs comfort.

Easter is the main event of the Christian faith. It is here where the questions move from "How could God let this happen to me?" to "What's next in a plan that is larger than my pain?"



From the Bishop

Bishop John Bradosky

The light of new hopes and powerful promises brings us comfort. The events of Easter stand in sharp contrast to Eugene O'Neill's play, "Long Day's Journey into Night." Basically he says that we are born into the brightest light we will ever know and from that point on, the shadows begin to gather. The shadows deepen as we move further and further in life until we come to total darkness and into that total darkness we slip. Instead, Easter, the central event of our faith brings light, clarity, hope and promise. The darkness is defeated and abandoned. Without Easter we have nothing to celebrate, but with it we are comforted beyond any other experience, hope or dream.

In the midst of our grief and sorrow, we need confidence. Listen to those words again, "Jesus is going ahead of you ... you will see him there."

The second Easter after the death of our son, Joshua, I preached a sermon entitled, "My Son Beat Me to the Grave." He has experienced a circumstance I have never faced, gone to a place ahead of me where I have never been. It seems strange for a son to line out the path for a father, and forever within me will be that longing that it should have been the other way around. More unmet expectations and disappointments!

Yet the good news of Easter is that Jesus has gone before us. He stands with us, and yet he goes ahead of us in our suffering, in death, and in the victory of life over death, the resurrection.

The Bible is filled with story after story, from Moses to Jesus, of a God that is out in front of us. God

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always goes before His people. He was always in front of Moses, in front of His people Israel, in front of the disciples, in front of those women on their way to the tomb. Jesus even says to His disciples before His death, "I go to prepare a place for you and if I go I will come again and receive you unto myself that where I am there you may be also" (*John 14:3-4*).

Before going into battle, a soldier left a written request with the chaplain. He wrote, "When I die, do not sound taps over my grave, but reveille, the morning call, the summons to rise." He could make that request with confidence because he knew Jesus had gone before him not only in death, but also in resurrection. On Easter we realize the strength of our confidence. There is no place we can go that Jesus has not been. There is no place that we need to go that He has not gone before us!

For our disappointments and unmet expectations, Easter brings a powerful word of comfort and confidence, but it also brings us the challenge to commitment. On that Easter morning the women were challenged to proclaim the Gospel that Jesus is alive.

Later on that evening of Easter, Jesus appeared to His disciples, breathed on them and said, "As the Father sent me, I am sending you." They were to go and proclaim the good news of the power of Easter for forgiveness and new life.

Jesus appears to Thomas and challenges him to put his finger in the marks of the nails and to place his hand in His side. He is to stop doubting and believe!

Jesus challenges Peter and the others that had gone fishing with the question, "Do you love me?" and He offers them the same invitation when He first called them, "Follow me!"

On the road to Emmaus Jesus appeared to those walking away from the fellowship of the disciples in Jerusalem. He explained the Scriptures, stayed with them, and broke bread with them. They recognized Jesus and were compelled to go back to the disciples and describe their encounter with Jesus. Isn't it amazing that no sooner had Jesus been

raised from death to life that He began to seek out hurting hearts?

The comfort and confidence of Easter prepare us for commitment, to share the Easter message, the Good News of Jesus Christ. The commitment of disciples even in the midst of such hopeless moments is to respond with faith through obedience to all that Jesus commands. We can follow those instructions, confident that He is already out in front of us.

The disciples did not stay in their impaired or incapacitated state; they chose to believe and to be obedient. It is always easier to find reasons to avoid responsibility rather than accept it. However, it is in faithful obedience that hope is renewed and fully experienced.

This world will never know the peace that only Jesus can provide until it hears the Good News from us. This world will never find contentment, fulfillment and hope until it experiences the Gospel of Jesus in our lives. Easter is an invitation to a new purpose and focus for living. It is the offering of a challenging commitment to faithful obedience to the one who has gone before us: Jesus, the one who goes ahead of us to show us the way to really live!

Easter proclaims the greater truth that resurrection is reality and Jesus calls us to live that eternal life in Him beginning right now. Jesus challenges us to focus on what really matters in this life, our relationship with Him and our relationships with the people He has given us to love and care for. That is all there is in this life that is eternal. Everything else is dust and rust.

This is the greatest power of Jesus' love for us, unleashed in the world. This is the power that brings new life, transformation and complete confidence for the future. The best that life can offer is Jesus, and Easter proclaims that life in Jesus is eternal, abundant in meaning, clear in purpose and selfless in direction. You are going to be around for a long time and the best is yet to be. May the comfort and confidence of Easter lead us to obediently accept Jesus' challenge to boldly proclaim His Good News in all we say and do in every relationship!

Christ is risen!
He is risen indeed! Alleluia!

Disaster Response training in Illinois

Immanuel Lutheran Church in Altona, Ill., hosted a disaster preparedness training April 21-22 for the Great Rivers Mission District. Mary Bates, NALC Disaster Response Coordinator, provided Active Shooter training on Friday evening and Response to Natural Disasters training on Saturday.

The Women of the NALC organized an in-gathering collection of quilts and flood buckets for the national disaster warehouse located in Caldwell, Ohio. They filled Mary's truck to capacity.

Volunteers learned how to form an early response team for debris removal, in addition to long term recovery teams who help with rebuilding damaged homes. Discussion was also held on preparing the church buildings for a disaster to strike and how to prepare families by constructing survival kits and go-packs.

For more information on NALC Disaster Response visit thenalc.org/nalc-disaster-response.



Mary Bates, NALC Disaster Response Coordinator, poses with some of the supplies brought to the NALC Disaster Response training in Altona, Ill.

Senior Adult Ministry Conference

The first North American Lutheran Church Senior Adult Ministry Conference will be held Oct. 17-18 at Reformation Lutheran Church in Culpeper, Va.

Topics covered include renewing the congregation through older adults, developing a discipleship-centered senior adult ministry, compelling mature adults to follow the call to service, and incorporating an inter-generational ministry into the life of the local church. The event will also include workshops and breakout sessions.

Featured presenters are Gary Pecuch, Pastor Wendy Berthelsen, and Pastor Brad Hales.

Gary Pecuch and his wife, Laurie, began a congregational youth and family consultation ministry named faithwebbing.com while serving at St. John's Evangelical Lutheran Church in Grove City, Ohio. The NALC entered an agreement with them to provide consultation for congregations.

Pastor Wendy Berthelsen has partnered with her husband, Joel, both in ministry and at home for many years. Most of Wendy's time as a pastor is devoted to Call, Inc., a non-profit teaching mission of Hope Lutheran Church where she serves in Cedar Hill, Texas.

Pastor Brad Hales is chair of the NALC Renewal Team, the pastor of Reformation Lutheran Church, Culpeper, Va., and the Dean of the NALC's Virginia Mission District. Pastor Hales has helped to renew several older congregations in discipleship, outreach and mission. In 2009, his present congregation was given the "Best Practices Award in Senior Adult Ministry" by the National Council on Aging. Hales has also authored the Bible study, *A Covenant of Aging*.

The cost of this conference is only \$25. Questions? Please contact Pastor Brad Hales at 540-270-1026 or pastorhales@hotmail.com.

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.

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



Don Collett



Paul Hinlicky



Gordon Isaac

“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.

Registration for the Braaten-Benne Lectures is \$125. You may register online at www.thenalc.org.

Dr. Don Collett is Associate Professor of Old Testament at Trinity School for Ministry. He has his Ph.D. from the University of St. Andrews in Scotland. He is a graduate of Westminster Seminary and Montana State University.

Dr. Paul Hinlicky is Tise Professor of Lutheran Studies at Roanoke College in Salem, Va. He is the author of several books, including *Luther and the Beloved Community: A Path for Christian Theology after Christendom*.

Dr. Gordon Isaac is Berkshire Associate Professor of Advent Christian Studies and Dean of Chapel at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary. The focus of his masters’ degrees and doctoral work was on Martin Luther. He is the



David Luy



David Yeago

author of *Left Behind or Left Befuddled: The Subtle Dangers of Popularizing the End Times*.

Dr. David J. Luy is Assistant Professor of Biblical and Systematic Theology at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School. He is the author of *Dominus Mortis: Martin Luther on the Incorruptibility of God in Christ*.

Dr. David Yeago is Professor of Systematic Theology and Ethics for the North American Lutheran Seminary and Trinity School for Ministry. He is the author of *The Apostolic Faith: A Catholic and Evangelical Introduction to Christian Theology*.

Webinar: The last faithwebbing.com webinar of the school year will be at 2 p.m. ET on Tuesday, May 16. We will continue our discussion on Biblical self-esteem and move into people skills.

The webinars continue to walk through the Faith Skills listed in the *What's In Your Bag?* book as well as the Faith Skills list. Need a list? Send us an email.

Webinars are free of charge. All you need to do is join in. Over 200 folks continue to tune in each month. Need the link? Email Gary and Laurie at faithwebbing@gmail.com.

NEXUS Institute: There is an excellent opportunity for some high school students this June. The NEXUS Institute at Grandview College in Des Moines, Iowa, received a grant from Eli Lilly to put together a theological academy for high school students. Their goal is to bring the best, deep-thinking teenagers together to spend a week with them exploring faith. The experience is a week long and will be offered three times in June. The dates are June 11-16, June 18-23, and June 25-30. Students only attend one week. It is a totally free experience once students get to Des Moines. For more information go to www.thenexusinstitute.org.

Ventures in Youth Ministry Symposium for adults that work with youth to be held Aug. 7-8 (during Lutheran Week) at the Sheraton Music City Hotel in Nashville, Tenn. Registration will take place through thenalc.org website in conjunction with Convocation registration. We are hoping to have all Mission Districts represented. Need an information flier? Zip us an email.

Gary and Laurie Pecuch have served in youth ministry for more than 30 years at St. John's Lutheran Church in Grove City, Ohio. They serve the NALC as youth ministry coaches and provide a variety of no-cost resources for NALC congregations through their website. Visit faithwebbing.com and fill out the contact form.

Mission resources available

By NALC Missions Team

As resources continue to be developed, we want to take a moment to keep you informed. More information and updates will be available at the NALC Mission Festival this summer in Nashville.

Short Term Mission Trips: Interested in joining a short-term mission trip this summer or in the future? A list of ongoing opportunities available through our Mission Partners can be found at <http://bit.ly/2ppRb4J>

Mission Connect: Sign up to receive a weekly update from the Mission Office. You can sign up to receive a weekly email or text message by:
Text: @mconnect to (614) 682-8693
Email: www.remind.com/join/mconnect

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Why is the NALC involved in international relationships?

In 2017, I have committed these Ministry Matters articles to addressing questions from pastors, members and congregations of the NALC. This month we have a question raised at the recent NALC Executive Council meeting in Columbus, Ohio, April 24-25.

One of the lay members of the council asked a question in response to reports related to our relationships with Lutherans in Ethiopia and Tanzania, as well as our commitment to the Global Confessional and Missional Lutheran Forum (hosted in conjunction with our Lutheran Week).

He asked, “Why is the NALC involved in international relationships?” He also asked that the answer to that question be shared with folks in the NALC to help them understand why we are focused on developing and encouraging relationships with other confessional and missional Lutherans around the world.

Addressing this in my Ministry Matters column seemed a direct and simple way to get the word out about the NALC and our international commitments.

To answer this question, we first look to the statement approved at the 2011 Convocation of the NALC. Presented and approved was *An Initial Statement on the Ecumenical and Inter-Lutheran Commitment of the North American Lutheran Church*. In it, we state:

Our confessional commitment leads us to participate in ecumenical and inter-Lutheran associations in response to Jesus’ prayer that all his believers may be one. We intend to engage in ecumenical and inter-Lutheran endeavors at the international, national, and local levels, in accordance with our commitment to the Scriptures and the Lutheran Confessions.

Our prayer is that the Holy Spirit will lead us into such ecumenical and inter-Lutheran endeavors in



Ministry Matters

Pastor David Wendel

Assistant to the Bishop
for Ministry and Ecumenism

faithfulness to the Great Commission of our Lord to “go 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.” (Matt. 28:19) We believe that all ecumenical and inter-Lutheran relationships should have as their goal the mission of Christ and his church “that the world may believe. . . that the world may know.” (John 17: 21,23)

Echoing this initial statement guiding the international mission of the NALC, Bishop John Bradosky states, “The Great Commission calls us to be ‘world Christians.’ We are called by Christ to ‘go to all nations.’ Our concern is that the Gospel of Jesus Christ is proclaimed in every nation and that people are becoming disciples of Jesus Christ in every nation. The second reason that this is important is that these relationships are part of our witness to the world. We demonstrate that the love of Jesus Christ transcends every division of culture or language. It gives expression to the gift Christ gives to us in His Body, the unity that is expressed in our relationships with one another.”

The Rev. Dr. Jim Nestingen explains the new life and new expression that are ours in Christ Jesus, when he writes, “Easter destroys boundaries. So when He was raised from the dead, Jesus could say, ‘all authority in heaven and earth has been given to me’ and then send His disciples — and so the rest of us — to ‘make disciples of all nations.’ In fact, Paul tells us in Philippians that when Jesus

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has completed what He began with His death and resurrection, 'every knee shall bow ... and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father.'"

Nestingen continues, "Sometimes human boundaries can't be penetrated. But just like the risen Christ, God's Word has a way of breaking through the limits. So the Church sends missionaries, people who will speak the Word, anywhere and everywhere. In Africa, in India, in Russia, in China, all over the world, God's Word does exactly what He says: it kills and makes alive, creating faith in those who hear the Gospel."

"One of the chief values of the North American Lutheran Church is its calling to be Congregationally Focused," shares NALC Bishop Emeritus Paull Spring. "As such, our priority mission field is North America. At the same time, we are also members of a larger Christian community. We are not sectarians, cut off from the rest of the Church. In the Creed we confess that the Church is one and catholic (universal). The Apostle Paul teaches that the Church is one body with many members (*Romans 12:5*). In some places," states Bishop Spring, "the Christian Church is weak and struggling; in other places the Church is strong and flourishing. Through our inter-Lutheran and ecumenical contacts, the NALC is able to support the Church where it is weak. We are also able to draw encouragement from those churches that are healthy and growing. 'If one member suffers, all suffer together with it; if one member is honored, all rejoice together with it' (*1 Corinthians 12:26*)."

"For example," says NALC General Secretary Pastor Mark Chavez, "The Church in Africa and Asia is growing rapidly in the face of intense opposition, even persecution, from the other dominant religions in many countries. The Church grows in the midst of poverty and limited resources. It should be a wake-up call for us in comfortable North America. We need to be connected with the Church on those continents to support the members of Christ's body, and to be inspired and motivated by their bold witness."

Finally, the one person who is probably the most attuned to and involved with our international

relationships, Assistant to the Bishop for Missions, the Rev. Dr. Gemechis Buba, offers four reasons for our global commitments and involvement:

- 1. The NALC is looked at as a primary voice of reform and renewal in western culture today because we have taken a stand for the truth and authority of the Word of God, separated from Biblical and theological liberalism and established a growing denomination. The NALC is a great example and hope for others. The NALC shows that it is possible.*
- 2. Many African churches have disassociated themselves from liberal Lutheran denominations. That trend will continue. The NALC and our international relationships allow the African churches to maintain relationships, and they can relate to the NALC as a partner that is biblically and confessionally faithful and trustworthy.*
- 3. Churches in Europe look at the NALC and realize that, together, we can have the courage to stand up for the sake of Jesus Christ and our witness in the world. They can say, we won't be alone! We have brothers and sisters in North America we can learn from and relate to. We won't be in isolation.*
- 4. Ultimately, it is all about mission! The NALC is a church that learns and that shares with brothers and sisters around the world. Particularly, we have so much to give and to receive when it comes to best practices of mission. For the sake of mission, it is critical for us to relate. We already have missionaries around the world and will continue to be in mission together with all biblical, confessional and missional Lutherans!*

As has been the case at our previous NALC Lutheran Weeks, our gathering in Nashville, Tenn., will have a decidedly international dimension. This is especially appropriate as we will be observing the 500th anniversary of the Reformation.

Aug. 7-11 will not only be the NALC's annual gathering but also the opportunity for us to give thanks to God together for the good news that we are saved by God's grace through faith in Jesus Christ!

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We will not “celebrate” division, schism, or upheaval in the Body of Christ, but the fact that God is always at work, through His Word and Holy Spirit, reforming the Church. The Holy Spirit was at work in the 1500s through the life and ministry of Dr. Martin Luther, even as God is at work today, around the world, creating and strengthening faith in Jesus Christ — “the same yesterday and today and forever” (*Hebrews 13:8*).

The theme of our 2017 Lutheran Week will speak to that continuing renewal and reform, as we focus on Philippians 2:12-18:

*Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, so now, not only as in my presence but much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; for God is at work in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure. Do all things without grumbling or questioning, that you may be blameless and innocent, children of God without blemish in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world, **holding fast the word of life**, so that in the day of Christ I may be proud that I did not run in vain or labor in vain. Even if I am to be poured as a libation upon the sacrificial offering of your faith, I am glad and rejoice with you all. Likewise you also should be glad and rejoice with me.*

The Global Confessional and Missional Lutheran Forum will be integrated more fully into the presentations, responses and discussion of our Mission Festival, with representatives from Sweden, Denmark, Norway, Germany, Belarus, Ethiopia, Tanzania, Sudan and other countries, all reflecting with us on “Congregational Renewal through the Word of God.”

In addition to the Global Forum, now in its third year, we will be blessed by the presence of the newly elected President of the Ethiopian Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus, the Rev. Yonas Yigezu, who will be the preacher at the Service of the Word at the beginning of our Mission Festival on Wednesday afternoon, Aug. 9. Also present will be the Rev. Dr. Berhanu Ofgaa, General Secretary of EECMY, who has been a participant in the Global Forum since its inception.



Our guest, and preacher at the Festival of the Reformation Service of Holy Communion, Thursday, Aug. 10, will be the Rt. Rev. Dr. Fredrick Onael Shoo, Presiding Bishop of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Tanzania.

We will also be joined by three distinguished professors of the ELCT Tumaini University Makumira, which includes their School of Theology. Participating in our Lutheran Week will be The Rev. Prof. Dr. Joseph W. Parsalaw, Vice Chancellor; the Rev. Dr. Angela Olotu, Dean, Faculty of Theology; and the Rev. Dr. Faustin Mahali, Deputy Vice Chancellor for Administration.

Far from a Reformation celebration focused on a German monk, priest and theologian of the 16th century, the NALC's Lutheran Week observance will acknowledge the global nature of the Gospel, the Great Commission, the Body of Christ, and the Lutheran tradition.

It will truly be a celebration of biblical, confessional and missional Lutheranism, as together we seek to hold fast to the Word of life, while praying that God will continue to renew, reform and transform His Church in the world. While the Lutheran Week is one relatively small part of the overall life and ministry of the NALC, it is reflective of our global, international commitment to making disciples of all nations, baptizing, teaching all that Jesus has commanded us.

I hope this answers the question, “Why is the NALC involved in international relationships” and perhaps stirs up a bit of heartfelt mission fervor in you as well! If this raises other questions, or you have other questions you would like me to address in this Ministry Matters series, please email me at dwendel@thenalc.org.



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NALC News

Published by

North American Lutheran Church

3500 Mill Run Drive
Hilliard, OH 43026-7770

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www.thenalc.org

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