

NOMINATIONS ANNOUNCED FOR POSITIONS TO BE ELECTED AT 2023 NALC MISSION CONVOCATION

The NALC Nominating Committee has announced the names of people who have been nominated to serve in positions to be elected at the 2023 NALC Mission Convocation, Aug. 9-11, in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma.



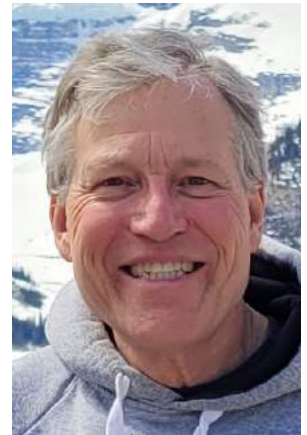
Dan Selbo



David Wendel



Scott Kramer



John Conrad

The convocation will elect the NALC bishop to a four-year term as well as one lay person and one pastor to four-year terms on the NALC Executive Council.



Scott Ness



Dieter Punt



Doug Schoelles



Pamela Thorson

Nominated for bishop are the Rev. Dr. Dan Selbo, NALC bishop, and the Rev. Dr. David Wendel, assistant to the bishop for ministry and ecumenism.

Scott Kramer, a member of St. John's Lutheran Church in Boerne, Texas, is the only person

Continued on Page 2

Continued from Page 1

nominated for the lay person position on Executive Council. He is currently serving on the Executive Council.

Five pastors have been nominated for the ordained minister position on Executive Council. They are:

+ The Rev. John Conrad, pastor of First Evangelical Lutheran Church in Floresville, Texas.

+ The Rev. Dr. Scott Ness, pastor of Prince of Peace Lutheran Church in Fayetteville, Georgia.

+ The Rev. Dieter Punt, pastor of Holy Trinity Lutheran Church in Troutman, North Carolina.

+ The Rev. Dr. Douglas Schoelles, pastor of St. John's Lutheran Church in Fort Wayne, Indiana.

+ The Rev. Pamela Thorson, pastor of Grace Lutheran Church in Erskine, Minnesota.

The Executive Council functions as the board of directors for the NALC, providing leadership for the church between annual convocations.

The convocation will also elect two members to the Court of Adjudication. Three pastors have been nominated for the court:

+ The Rev. Thomas Brodbeck, pastor of Grace Lutheran Church in Springfield, Ohio.

+ The Rev. Leslie Haines, executive director of Lutheran Military Veterans and Family Ministries in Fort Wayne, Indiana. She is a member of St. John's Lutheran Church of Lake Township, Fort Wayne, Indiana.

+ The Rev. Ryan Henkel, pastor of Emmons Lutheran Church in Emmons, Minnesota.

The Court of Adjudication hears appeals from disciplinary decisions; resolves questions of interpretation of NALC governing documents. Both



Thomas Brodbeck



Leslie Haines



Ryan Henkel

pastors and lay members may be elected to the Court of Adjudication.

The Nominating Committee has published biographical information on the nominees to meet the constitutional deadline to distribute this information to NALC members 90 days prior to the convocation. The biographical information on the nominees is available at thenalc.org/nominationbios.

Additional nominations to serve on Executive Council and Court of Adjudication are possible. Three or more delegates representing at least three congregations may together submit an additional nomination. The nomination and biographical information from the candidate must be submitted to the Nominating Committee no later than 45 days prior to the convocation.

The final deadline for submitting additional nominations for the Executive Council and Court of Adjudication is June 26, but it is helpful for additional nominations to be submitted as soon as possible so that biographical information can be prepared for distribution.

Additional nominations for bishop may be made from the floor of the convocation.

The NALC Executive Council has prepared a booklet of prayers encouraging congregations and members to engage in prayer and discernment leading up to the bishop's election. You may access the booklet at lutheranweek.com/prayers-of-discernment.

Questions may be addressed to the Nominating Committee at nominations@thenalc.org.

2023 LUTHERAN WEEK

Registration is now open for the NALC's 2023 Lutheran Week, Aug. 8-11, at the Omni Oklahoma City Hotel in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma.

The 2023 NALC Mission Convocation will be held Wednesday, Aug. 9, through Friday, Aug. 11. Registration fee is \$275 and includes lunch on both Thursday and Friday and a banquet on Thursday night. The convocation will begin at 1:30 p.m. on Wednesday. It is scheduled to conclude at 5 p.m. on Friday.

The Carl E. Braaten-Robert D. Benne Lectures in Theology are set for Tuesday afternoon and Wednesday morning, Aug. 8-9. Registration fee is \$150 and includes lunch on Wednesday.

A Faith Formation Festival is set for Tuesday, Aug. 8, and Wednesday, Aug. 9. The festival promises to include "everything you want to know about youth and family ministry." Cost is \$120 and includes lunch on both days. The Faith Formation Festival



begins at 8 a.m. on Tuesday and concludes with lunch on Wednesday.

The Women of the NALC Gathering is on Tuesday, Aug. 8. It begins at 8:30 a.m. and concludes at 5:30 p.m. Registration fee is \$100 and includes lunch.

All events are open to delegates and visitors. Go to lutheranweek.com to register or for more information.

MAY IS OLDER AMERICANS MONTH

By Pastor Brad Hales
Director of Church Planting and Aging Ministries

During May, we celebrate Older Americans Month. We remember our mature adults and the contributions that they continually make to our local communities. But it could mean so much more.

In just a little over 10 years, there will be more people over the age of 65 than under the age of 18 in North America. Most of our churches can already see that their congregations are aging at a rapid rate. While some may see this as a characteristic of decline, the NALC sees a "graying" parish as an opportunity for discipleship growth, care and outreach.

It may not make sense to you that a maturing church can be renewed with other older adults. We've always been taught that it's all about reaching out to children, youth and families. And while this continues to be very important, why can't an aging congregation use the gifts that they have been provided by God to do ministry for His kingdom?

If your congregation is older, and would be open to a discussion on how to use aging to help spiritually grow and strengthen the church, please contact me at bhales@thenalc.org or call 540-270-1026. A maturing Body of Christ does not signal demise, but the map toward hope and revival.

NATHAN YODER JOINS NORTH AMERICAN LUTHERAN SEMINARY FACULTY AT GORDON CONWELL

The Rev. Dr. Nathan Howard Yoder has been called as a full-time faculty member of the North American Lutheran Seminary (NALS). He will be serving at a new NALS Network School at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary (GCTS) in Charlotte, North Carolina.

The NALS Board of Regents and the NALC Executive Council issued the call to Dr. Yoder and approved the addition of the NALS Network School at GCTS at a joint meeting in May.

Pastor Yoder will join the NALS faculty as a full-time teaching theologian and will serve as director of Lutheran Studies at the GCTS Charlotte campus. He will continue to serve as pastor of St. Martin's Lutheran Church in Maiden, North Carolina.

"I am so thankful that we now have a formalized partnership with Gordon-Conwell in our Seminary Network. This solidified relationship comes as an answer to many prayers," Bishop Dan Selbo said.

"I am also thankful for the appointment of Dr. Nathan Yoder to serve as the Director of Lutheran Studies at Gordon-Conwell and excited to see what God will do with his gifts and our partnership to raise up pastors and leaders to serve in Christ's Church," Bishop Selbo said.

Dr. Yoder follows the Rev. Dr. Mary Havens as director of Lutheran Studies at GCTS. Dr. Havens, also an NALC pastor, will continue to teach as an adjunct professor for the Lutheran Studies program at GCTS. The NALC Executive Council issued a call to Dr. Havens for her new position.

"On behalf of the NALC, thank you to Dr. Mary Havens, who has served faithfully as director for the



The Rev. Dr. Nathan Howard Yoder

past 10 years, as well as to the Lutheran Studies Board whose efforts were instrumental in enabling this to happen," Bishop Selbo said.

Dr. Yoder previously served as an adjunct faculty member for the NALS, most recently co-teaching a course entitled "Congregationally Focused for Congregational Renewal" in summer of 2022.

The NALS Network consists of the Seminary Center at Trinity School for Ministry in Ambridge, Pennsylvania, as well as Network Schools at Beeson Divinity School in Birmingham, Alabama; Concordia Lutheran Seminary in Edmonton, Alberta; Fuller Theological Seminary in Pasadena, California, and

Continued on Page 5

Continued from Page 4

Houston, Texas; Sioux Falls Seminary (Kairos University) in Sioux Falls, South Dakota; and now Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary in Charlotte, North Carolina.

The addition of GCTS to the NALS Network will benefit the NALC greatly. Its Charlotte campus brings a southeastern seminary into a network that stretches across the United States and Canada, providing opportunities for regional theological and pastoral formation across the entire NALC.

The NALC has a strong presence in the Carolinas. GCTS will especially be able to serve the four mission districts of the Carolinas Mission Region.

Dr. Yoder graduated with his Ph.D. degree from the University of Regensburg (Germany) in 2011, and his dissertation, “*Ordnung in Gemeinschaft*: A Critical Appraisal of the Erlangen Contribution to the Orders of Creation,” evaluated the variant orders of creation models of the Lutheran “Erlangen theologians” (specifically Paul Althaus, Werner Elert and Walter Künneth) of the 19th and 20th centuries.

Dr. Yoder earned a Masters of Sacred Theology degree from Lutheran Theological Southern Seminary in Columbia, South Carolina, in 2009 and a Masters of Divinity degree from the Wake Forest University School of Divinity in Winston-Salem, North Carolina, in 2002.

Dr. Yoder is a graduate of Lenoir-Rhyne University in Hickory, North Carolina, where his father, the Rev. Dr. Jacob Larry Yoder, was a professor of religion.

Dr. Yoder has been very involved in the NALC since 2011. He currently serves on the Commission on Theology and Doctrine, as the coordinator of the Braaten-Benne Lectures in Theology, and as a member of the Lutheran Theologians for the Church (formerly called the “Younger Theologians Colloquium”). He served as dean for the Carolinas Mission District before that mission district divided into the four mission districts of the Carolinas Mission Region, and he has recently completed his



service as dean for the Catawba Valley Mission District. He has also been involved as an NALC representative in the Global Confessional and Missional Lutheran Forum and as a member of the NALC Life-to-Life Discipleship team.

Dr. Yoder is a member of the Society of the Holy Trinity, a pan-Lutheran ministerium dedicated to the confessional renewal of the Church through mutual accountability in obedience to Christ and faithfulness to the vows of ordination.

The new partnership between the NALS and GCTS is unique as this will be the first NALS Network school – other than at the Seminary Center at Trinity School for Ministry – where the NALS will have a full-time faculty member serving and teaching.

The Rev. Dr. Eric Riesen, president of the NALS, expressed his excitement about the partnership with GCTS and Yoder’s call. “We are focused on forming pastors for the NALC, and Gordon-Conwell is a great fit and a great seminary,” Dr. Riesen said.

“To have one of our own NALS teaching theologians as the director of the Lutheran Studies program is a tremendous asset. We’re so happy to have Nathan in this role. We in the NALS have known Nathan for a long time, and he is a gifted theologian. This is a great moment for the NALC and the NALS.”

Dr. Yoder expressed his commitment to the NALC and the vision for theological education and pastoral formation shared by the NALS and GCTS. “The partnership between the NALS and Gordon-Conwell is a blessing for the formation of faithful pastors for the NALC and the broader Church,” he said.

CONNECTED TO CHRIST

It's one of the simplest analogies we find in the Bible and one of the easiest comparisons Jesus makes for us to follow. It's also one of the most important and powerful statements He gives to us about Himself and about the connection we need in our lives to have with Him.

Jesus says, "I am the true vine and my Father is the gardener. He cuts off every branch in Me that bears no fruit, while every branch that does bear fruit He prunes so that it will be even more fruitful." Then He says, "I am the Vine and you are the branches. If you remain in Me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; for apart from Me you can do nothing" (John 15:1-2, 5).

That's quite the statement Jesus makes about Himself. It says worlds about how the Christian life works. We need to stay connected to Jesus if we're to bear fruit. We need to stay in contact with Christ if our lives are to produce anything that lasts.

It's also quite the claim He makes about Himself and about how, apart from Him, we can do nothing. It is not, however, a claim inconsistent with what we believe and confess. In the Apostles' Creed, when we confess what we believe about who God is and what God does, it's clear that without Christ in our lives it's not going to work.

Theologically, in all three articles of the creed, it's the work of God in three Persons — Father, Son and Holy Spirit — that enables the Christian life to happen. It all depends on Him.

In the first article, we confess what we believe about God the Father as the Creator. We are totally dependent upon the Father for our existence. The universe itself, the world in which we live, every breath we take comes as a gift and is possible only by His grace.

In the second article, we confess what we believe about Jesus as Savior. He came to this earth as one of us. He didn't ask us what we thought before



FROM THE BISHOP

REV. DR. DAN SELBO
BISHOP

doing it. He just did it. This was God's doing. Jesus lived and died so that we might have life.

In the third article, it's the work of the Holy Spirit. The Spirit is the one who creates faith in us. He is the one who enables us to live and to look like Christ. We have no power in ourselves to believe or to live as God wants, apart from what He makes possible for us through His Spirit.

Put that together and what do you have? You have exactly what Jesus said to us and claimed about Himself. "I am the vine and you are the branches ... remain in me and I in you, and you will bear fruit ... cut yourself off from me ... and good luck doing anything that will last."

When we think about God as being three-in-one, we cannot think about the work of each person in the Trinity without thinking about the other two.

The Father is the Creator, but the Scriptures tell us that "in Jesus, all things were created" (Colossians 1:16) and "without Him nothing was made that has been made" (John 1:3). In the same way, the Spirit is the one who leads us to faith, but Christ has promised to "not leave us orphans ... but to be with us" at all times in and through the Spirit (John 14:18-20).

In other words, Jesus is actively involved in the work of all three. Jesus is intimately involved in every aspect of our lives. As a result, His words are truer than we might think. "Apart from me," He says, "you can do nothing."

Continued on Page 7

Continued from Page 6

At first hearing, it might seem as if those words are not very hope filled. Apart from Jesus, you can do nothing. That doesn't sound like a very optimistic statement. But turn it around, as a word of promise, and it is.

Apart from Jesus, we can do nothing. It's true. We can't and we won't. At least not anything that lasts. But "in Jesus" and "connected to Jesus" and through the power and the promise of Jesus, the apostle Paul says, "I can do all things through Christ who gives me strength" (Philippians 4:13). There's nothing I can't do when I remain connected to Jesus. There's nothing beyond my hope and my reach when I'm connected to Christ.

We all know about the importance of being connected. The connections we have are becoming increasingly more important and essential every day. Go on the internet and you can connect with people all over the world. Things like "Facebook," "Linked In," "Twitter," "Snapchat" and "Instagram" are everywhere you turn.

The reality is that you can live with any one of those in your life — and many people have all of them — and be just fine. You can also live without any one of those in your life — and many people have none of them — and be just fine. But you cannot and will not and you will never live and be just fine outside of Christ.

Our connection with Jesus makes all the difference in the world. Staying intimately attached to Christ is the starting point of the Christian life. It's where it all starts. It's also the sustaining part of the Christian life. It's how it remains strong.

Eight times in the first seven verses of John 15, Jesus talks about how we're to "remain" in Him. "Remain in me, and I will remain in you." He says, "No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit," Jesus says, "unless you remain in me" (John 15:4).

You know as well as I do that the challenge of remaining in Jesus is a daily challenge. It's easy to get caught up in doing so many things, many of

which are worthwhile, that we forget about the One with whom we need the connection the most.

Days go by, and we haven't opened our Bibles. Weeks come and go, and our prayer lives end up being put on hold. One week, we end up missing church. The next week, something else comes up and we miss it again. Before we know it, it's no longer a regular pattern and part of our life.

Don't miss the point. The disciplines of the Christian life don't save us from anything. Jesus saves us. And He saves us from everything. But they do serve a purpose. And the purpose they serve is to connect us to Christ.

It's possible in this world to have a full life without producing any fruit. It's possible to stay busy and productive without producing anything that lasts. We need to keep the connection alive. We need to stay in touch with Jesus, keep on returning to the One who is our source.

It's a simple principle of life. It's also a profound lesson we need to learn. Try holding your breath and continuing to function. It won't happen. Unplug the toaster, and you'll never end up with toast. It's the same in the Christian life when it comes to our connection with Jesus. Unplug your life from Christ and you might remain busy, and you might have a life filled with all kinds of things that are good. But if they're not being done in Christ, if they're not growing out of your relationship with Jesus, then they're not bearing any lasting fruit.

In Christ, we live. Apart from Christ, we die. It's that simple. No matter where we are in life, it makes no difference. As a student, as a parent, as a husband or wife, single or married, working or retired, widowed or a widower — you name it, and it fits.

It's the connection we have with Jesus, day in and day out, from the time we're born, until that day when we're called home to be with our Lord — the goal of our life, the purpose of our life, the reason we're here as we are, by the grace of God — Father, Son and Holy Spirit — is to bear fruit for Jesus — one day at a time, one faithful word or action at a time, one branch at a time, because that's what we are, connected to the One who is the Vine.

NALC EXECUTIVE COUNCIL UPDATE

January Executive Council meeting

+ The Executive Council gave its approval to the proposed NALC Foundation from the Finance Committee.

+ The Executive Council reviewed materials to send out to congregations in advance of the bishop's election at this year's Mission Convocation.

February Executive Council meeting

+ The Executive Council approved a request from the Rev. Dr. Lalisa Daniel, mission director for the Ethiopian Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus, to translate the *NALC Life-to-Life Discipleship Manual* into the Amharic and Afan Oromo languages.

+ The Executive Council approved the following invitations for the 2023 Mission Convocation:

Invitation to the Rev. Dr. Fredrick Onael Shoo, presiding bishop of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Tanzania, and the Rev. Yonas Yigezu, president of the Ethiopian Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus, and a staff member from each church to come for the Global Confessional and Missional Lutheran Forum.

Invitation to the Tumaini Choir, directed by Randall Stubbs, professor of music at Tumaini University in Makumira, Tanzania. Mr. Stubbs is an NALC global worker through Awakening Lives to World Mission. He requested funding for 15 people (musicians and dancers) to attend the convocation.

Invitation to the Rev. Dr. Bruk Ayele, president of Mekane Yesus Seminary in Ethiopia, to attend the convocation.

March Executive Council meeting

+ The Executive Council approved the adoption of the NALC Foundation Charter as presented by the NALC Foundation working group.

+ The Finance Committee asked that the funding for the visit of our Global Confessional and Missional Lutheran Forum guests and the Tumaini Choir to the 2023 Mission Convocation come from unrestricted funds.

May Executive Council meeting

+ Accepted a colloquy process for clergy from non-Lutheran backgrounds.

+ Received with appreciation the statement on the question of non-NALC Lutheran and non-Lutheran clergy serving in NALC congregations from the Commission on Theology and Doctrine. Asked that this document as well as *The Word of Counsel for Lay Worship Leadership* be shared with the NALC deans.

+ Approved the proposal to translate the *NALC Life-to-Life Discipleship Manual* into Oromo and Amharic and to publish it in volume, at a cost of \$32,498 for the first 1,000 copies, to be used in the Ethiopian Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus. It will be financed from global mission funds from the sale of Christ the King Lutheran Church in Ohio.

+ Approved the recommendation from the North American Lutheran Seminary (NALS) Board of Regents to have the Rev. Pastor Paul Krueger as their representative to the NALC Foundation Committee.

+ Appointed Mike Johnson, the Rev. Paul Krueger, Ryan Schwarz, Darrell Shideler and Joel Williams to the NALC Foundation Committee.

+ Appointed Mike Johnson chair of the NALC Foundation Committee.

+ Upon recommendation from the NALS Board of Regents, the Executive Council adopted a revised vision for the seminary hub and spokes model. The revised vision for the NALS Network emphasizes a true hub and center of the NALS Network at Trinity

Continued on Page 9

Continued from Page 8

School for Ministry in Ambridge, Pennsylvania, with spokes that integrate with the hub in the form of the other NALS Network schools. Three options for seminary education, as presented by the NALS faculty and staff, were also approved.

+ Upon recommendation from the NALS Board of Regents, the Executive Council approved an amended Memorandum of Understanding with Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary.

+ Upon recommendation of the NALS Board of Regents, the Executive Council extended a call to the Rev. Dr. Nathan Yoder to serve as the director of Lutheran Studies Program at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary in Charlotte, North Carolina, and as a full faculty member of the NALS.

+ Upon recommendation of the NALS Board of Regents, the Executive Council extended a specialized call to the Rev. Dr. Mary Havens to serve as adjunct faculty of the Lutheran Studies Program at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary in Charlotte, North Carolina.

+ Approved the adoption of a calculation of the lay delegates at one person for every 260 baptized members for the 2023 Mission Convocation.

+ Approved that the NALC provide 40 grants of \$500 per congregation for the 2023 Mission Convocation.

+ Approved a proposal to require psychological evaluations for pastors coming into the NALC. The bishop may also require current pastors to undergo an evaluation if he thinks one is necessary. The cost

of psychological evaluations will be covered by the NALC.

+ Bishop Selbo appointed Bishop Emeritus John Bradosky as an *ex officio* member of the Commission for Theology and Doctrine (CTD). Bishop Selbo also appointed Dr. David Luy, an NALS faculty member at the Seminary Center at Trinity School for Ministry in Ambridge, Pennsylvania; the Rev. Dr. Andrew Weisner, a pastor from Hickory, North Carolina; and the Rev. Dr. Thomas Jacobson, pastor of Grace Lutheran Church, Thornville, Ohio, to the CTD. The Executive Council affirmed these appointments by the bishop to three-year terms on the CTD.

JOURNAL NOTES JIM NESTINGEN'S LIFE AND WORK

The life and work of the Rev. Dr. James A. Nestingen are featured in the latest edition of *Simul*, the journal of St. Paul Lutheran Seminary.



James Nestingen

Dr. Nestingen was a well known Lutheran scholar. He was an NALC pastor and was the presenter for many NALC pastors conferences and convocations.

You can read the journal online at semcl.org/simul.

LET'S KEEP IN TOUCH

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NORTH AMERICAN
LUTHERAN
CHURCH

Please copy and share this newsletter widely.

NALC AWARDS \$197,000 IN MISSION GRANTS FOR 2023

*By Pastor Carol Fryer
NALC Missions Specialist*

Each year the NALC Missions Team awards grants to applicants in six categories. Those six categories are: global workers, global projects, new starts, renewal, multi-national, emergency or transition funds.

Applications are submitted in November for the upcoming year, though certain applications may be submitted at any time. The NALC budget includes money for grants each year. In addition, the funds that are given through the Great Commission Fund are designated for these grants as well as to provide support for our Ministry Partners.

Global Workers

Nine Grants have been awarded for the support of global workers. Each grant is \$12,000 and provides \$1,000 a month through the agencies that sponsor our global workers. The total amount awarded to global workers is \$108,000.

We have two new global workers who have received grants this year.

The Rev. Sam Chim is a new NALC global worker for us and will be commissioned in August. Pastor Sam works with Awakening Lives to World Mission (ALWM) in Cambodia, which is only 2 percent Christian and where they are still recovering from the horrors of the Pol Pot regime in the 1970s.

Pastor Sam is a seasoned church planter with more than 30 years of experience in ministry. He and his team currently have a network of 15 churches and ministries in Cambodia, plus two schools. This includes more than 700 people. In addition, there are another 50 underground cell



Sam Chim



Randy Stubbs

groups in neighboring Viet Nam with more than 700 members. Going into rural villages, they bring rice and water, build wells, and bring the Gospel to families and education to youth and children.

Pastor Sam has been serving in Cambodia for more than 20 years, mostly without pay. Acquiring land and establishing farms has provided food and income to support the ministry. We are delighted to have him as one of our Global Workers. You can find out more at alwm.org/cambodia.

Randy Stubbs is also a new NALC global worker. We are very excited that he and his family and a small choir will be with us at our Lutheran Week in August.

Randy is a church musician who has been training church musicians and pastors of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Tanzania. Since 2006, Randy has been teaching at Tumaini University in Makumira, Tanzania, the primary training school for pastors in East Africa, with support from ALWM.

Continued on Page 11

Continued from Page 10

Randy writes in his application to become a global worker:

Tumaini University Makumira is ... the first university in Tanzania to offer a Bachelor of Arts in Music degree, begun in 2005 with just four students. This year we have almost 50 students.

Music is the primary tool for evangelism in Tanzania, but most churches suffer with musicians with no formal training at all. There are many choirs and churches, but few qualified musicians (can read music, can play one or more instruments well, plus direct a choir, compose/arrange anthems, know how to plan music for services, etc.). The few churches and dioceses with a trained musician have programs on a significantly higher level and outreach and growth are significantly higher as well.

Randy Serves as the manager of the Cultural Arts Center at Tumaini University Makumira (TUMA). We – Bishop Dan and Mary Selbo, General Secretary Amy Little, Pastor Gemechis Buba, Pastor David Wendel, NALS President Eric Riesen and I – were delighted to meet Randy last November when we visited our colleagues in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Tanzania. We were so impressed with his dedication and accomplishments that we eagerly sought to make him one of our global workers. I hope you will be in Oklahoma City for Lutheran Week so you can meet him and hear the wonderful, lively music of our brothers and sisters in Tanzania.

Global Worker Grants for 2023 have also been awarded to:

Stephen Katterhenrich who works with Wycliffe Bible Translators to translate the Bible into the language of the Bungu people in southwest Tanzania, East Africa. You can find out more about Stephen and his family at wycliffe.org/partner/Katterhenrich.



Students from the Cultural Arts Center at Tumaini University Makumira will be performing at the 2023 NALC Mission Convocation.

Pastor Valery Hryhoryk carries out his ministry in Belarus and among refugees from the Ukraine. You can read more about his work in the February 2023 issue of the NALC newsletter. Pastor Hryhoryk works with Awakening Lives to World Mission (ALWM). You can find out more at alwm.org/blmf.

Pastor Didi Panzo and his wife, Serafina, have been serving in the Democratic Republic of Congo since 2016. They are sent by World Mission Prayer League (WMPL). You can find out more about their mission at wmpl.org/fellow-worker/didi-serafina.

Pastor William Obaga and his wife Margaret also serve with WMPL in East Africa, based in Nairobi, Kenya. William is the regional director for East Africa and Margaret works with the local church in diakonia services. Find out more at wmpl.org/fellow-worker/william-margaret.

Jonathan Gowin works with Bethany International in their Gospel Truck Outreach Program, proclaiming the Gospel in The Gambia, West Africa. Jonathan will be ordained as an NALC pastor in August. You can find out more about the Gospel Truck at cfan.eu/events/events-2019-2020/gospel-truck and about Bethany International at bethanyinternational.org/bethany-gateways.

Continued on Page 12

Continued from Page 11

Pastor Marta Shanka serves with Spiritual Orphans Network in Dubai. She is pastor to Ethiopian Christians living and working in Dubai. She is also the administrator and one of the teachers at Leadstar Theological College, training young pastors and church leaders. You can find out more about Pastor Martha at sonetwork.org/learn/where-we-serve/ethiopia.

Nijhar and Neeraj are pastors working with WMPL in India. They have been teaching, mentoring, and discipling young adults there. You find out more at wmpl.org/fellow-worker/neeraj-nijhar.

Global Projects

Five grants have been awarded to support global projects. Each of these grants provides \$5,000 for a project. The total amount awarded for global projects is \$25,000. The five projects receiving grant money this year are:

Home of Peace Orphanage in Bariadi, Tanzania — This is an ongoing project that was started by members of Grace Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jackson Center, Ohio. In addition to caring for orphans in the village of Bariadi, the ministry includes evangelical outreach to surrounding villages. Pastor Bert Schultz would be eager to tell you more.

Christian Media Center in Sierra Leone — The Christian Media Center is a church plant and Christian school in the village of Yengesa in southern Sierra Leone, a predominately Muslim country. Pastor Philip Sandi started this mission in 2019.

Congo Mission International — This project consists of building in the Kasai-Oriental province of the Democratic Republic of Congo, a multipurpose facility that includes a sanctuary, a hall and two large rooms for literary programs and teaching women how to sew clothes. In this region of Congo, the Lutheran community is vibrant and fast growing but, due to pronounced poverty, Lutherans have no building whatsoever of their own. This mission is led by Pastor Stéphane Kalonji.

ALWM Cambodia Youth Event — This grant will support a youth ministry conference in Siem Reap, Cambodia. As many as 250 youth are expected to attend. Pastor Sam Chim, our new global worker, will lead the team from ALWM.

WMPL Youth Discipleship in Kenya — This grant will support a youth discipleship program in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Kenya. Dr. William Obaga, our global worker in Kenya, hopes to serve over 4,000 youth, ages 13-25.

New Starts

New Start Grants may be given to church plants for up to three years with descending amounts. This year grants have been given to five mission-information congregations in the NALC. The total amount granted is \$40,000. Those New Starts are:

- + Faith Lutheran Church in Wilmington, North Carolina.
- + Trinity Lutheran Church in St. Charles, Minnesota.
- + West County Lutheran Church in Wildwood, Missouri.
- + Faith Landing Lutheran Church in Grand Blanc, Michigan.
- + Korean Church Planting in Edmonton, Alberta.

As part of the grant, the pastors and/or leaders will meet together with Pastor Brad Hales and me, Pastor Carol Fryer, several times throughout the year for encouragement, guidance, and mutual support. Our main focus will be on helping our new congregations grow in discipleship.

A Renewal Grant of \$12,000 has been awarded to Rindal Lutheran Church in Viking, Minnesota. The grant will be used to expand the worship space and make it handicap accessible.

For more information about these grants, please contact the NALC Missions Office at missions@thenalc.org or Pastor Carol Fryer, NALC missions specialist, at cfryer@thenalc.org.

UPDATE FROM PASTOR MARTA SHANKA, GLOBAL WORKER IN DUBAI

What a mighty God we serve! God has continued to accomplish His wonderful deeds in the United Arab Emirates (UAE) where I am serving the Lord. My ministry here is focusing on teaching and equipping young leaders and pastors in Leadstar Theological College and with families and groups as well.



There have been several advancements in the Bible college and in the discipleship classes with some groups in different dimensions and the work of God is growing and increasing incredibly. I will mention some points as follows.

Since we started the college, we have trained around 200 leaders and pastors from 14 different countries all over the world. We have had three graduations and now are preparing for the fourth one. I am very grateful for the work of God here in UAE.

We now have students from 10 countries and almost all are pastors and church leaders. They have stayed in the college for nearly for two years and in this time they have gained much biblical knowledge and life-changing biblical truths from lectures in the class room and from different instructors' life experiences.

In order to help the students to grow in various areas of their spiritual lives, I tried to engage them in different activities including:

- + a small group prayer team.
- + a small group discussion team.
- + 24 hour prayer chain every month.

+ Thirty minutes of prayer before starting each class.

+ Praying for each one of them.

+ Praying and counseling them with various problems.

The class is held three times per week for two hours each time.

In these days they have enough time for learning and teaching process.

The UAE students had fellowship time at different times. We are worshiping, praying and sharing the Word of God while we are together.

Testimonies from some students

There are 20 students in our College who are servants from a church in Abu Dhabi (UAE). Most of them are serving as church leaders and some of them are different department coordinators, such as prayer team leader, evangelism, discipleship

Continued on Page 14

Continued from Page 13

teachers, marriage counselors, etc. Since they have started the college they have seen radical changes in their spiritual lives and ministry.

The online teaching of the college provides a good opportunity for the busy lives of many people. This situation also makes it possible to get many experienced teachers and professors from all over the world.



Fikru is one of my student who is living in Abu Dhabi. When he came to the school he shared with me some prayer requests. He had a problem with his wife and they separated for six years. When they separated their twin girl and boy were a year old. We started to pray about the issues between them and finally after six years they were reunited. Before he couldn't get any chance to see his children. After six years he can see his children. God had done incredible work in their marriage.

Wendwessen and Eskedar live in Abu Dhabi and serve the Lord in the church as leaders. They have three children, and both of them are my students. They told me that since they joined the college their spiritual lifestyles and ministry have changed. How they lead the flock of God, how they teach and preach the Word of God are some of the areas in which they have changed since they joined us.

We have good fellowship with other churches around us. As we all know having a good unity with churches and ministers around us is important for our ministry. Now we are serving, understanding and praying together with people we did not know before.

Being with UAE leaders together like you see was very difficult until recently. Those who previously opposed my ministry are now supportive. This is God's miracle. He destroyed any kinds of devil tools like, hate and bitterness from their heart and made

us united. This situation gives a big good opportunity for God's work in my ministry.

I have started a Bible study group with seven families, 16 people total. They all are living in Dubai and Sharjah. We have time to study the Word of God and pray together. We are strongly praying for each one of us weekly.

There are about 13 local churches in the UAE. In order to equip and train them in the Word of God, we are training in various teams. At least two times per year the Rev. Dr. Gemechis Buba has come and taught the leaders and pastors from all over UAE. These short trainings have impacted their lives and ministry in many ways.

We have now had four graduating classes with around 200 young leaders and pastors. This implies that we need to keep accomplishing our purpose by equipping more servants and skillful leaders for God's kingdom.

I am very thankful that the work of God is increasing day by day.

We have heard many testimonies from students that their spiritual lives have changed.

Many churches are willing to send students to our college in the next round.

Continued on Page 15



Continued from Page 14

I am hearing lots of testimonies from students as they have changed in their spiritual life and in their ministry.

We are preparing for graduation on June 10, grateful for the incredible work of God.

Thank you to the North American Lutheran Church for your prayers and financial support. Also, I am very much encouraged by your visits to Dubai to see what God has done and to visit me.

Thank you to Spiritual Orphans Network for your tireless follow up, prayers, support and concern. Especially when I was in the United States. Thank you for facilitating visits to at least eight states preaching, evangelizing and giving testimonies regarding my ministry.

Thank you very much to Dr. Gemechis Buba for incredible work especially in UAE mission field. He is really a blessing for the thousands in his ministry. Leadstar Theological College is a vast and very useful college for churches, busy pastors and leaders. Thank you for your encouragement, prayer and help even personally. I am very much grateful that you are the one who helps me to communicate with NALC and for all the opportunities to serve the Lord.

My father and mother were missionaries in the southern part of Ethiopia. He was an evangelist and planted many churches and reached out for thousands. My mom is a strong believer and a prayer warrior.

My dad went to the Lord four years ago. My mom is continually praying for me and my ministry. When I call her, the first question she usually asks me that “Are new believers still being added to the congregation?” She is my example for how to live according to the Bible by fearing the Lord. We usually have a prayer program once a week and truly she is serving with me.

God willing, we will have the following plans: We will have the third round graduation on June 10. Dr. Gemechis Buba will come to Dubai and will have a graduation program. God willing, we will have a large number of students from all over the world.

In my last August visit to the United States, I have seen a large need for equipping servants. I keep praying to start a Leadstar College online program in North America in their time zones.

Finally, even though there are many challenges, God will lead me and my ministry in Leadstar and will do miracles not only in UAE but also in the Middle East and all over the world.

FOLLOWING A QUILT FROM NORTH CAROLINA CONGREGATION LEADS TO ENCOUNTER IN ARKANSAS

By Amy Crowley

We always live in His hope.

In April, Greg and I planned a trip to the Memphis, Tennessee, area to watch our 15-year-old grandson play in two high school soccer games. It was a 9.5 hour, 600-mile drive. We had great weather, and the drive there was good. After missing out on the last room at the hotel we wanted, we settled for one that was not in a great location and was showing its age. We decided pretty quickly that we would spend one night and relocate to a different hotel the next day.

We sent a text to our grandson letting him know that we were in town and looking forward to his game. We left our hotel room shortly before 5 p.m. to pick up Chick-fil-A en route to the soccer game that was about 20 miles away. The drive-thru line was exceptionally long and slow, and, having been eager to get to the game early, we were frustrated. After driving away, we realized that the sauces we ordered were not included — as Chick-Fil-A regulars, we “need” our sauces. We were disappointed.

After a long drive with lots of twists and turns, we arrived at the soccer field at 6:25 p.m. with plenty time to watch the team warm up. Almost immediately after we parked, we received a text from Lucas’ mother saying that he was worried about us because he thought we were coming to his game. We were confused about why she would be saying this since we were early. We quickly realized that the schedule that Lucas sent us showing his game at 7 p.m. must have been changed and we were not aware.

The game was almost half over when we arrived and Lucas was taking a break on the bench. We



Sean and Kimberly Weeks and Amy Crowley pose with the quilt Sean received from quilters at Holy Trinity Evangelical Lutheran Church in Troutman, North Carolina, through NALC Disaster Response.

were pretty upset. The score was already 4-0 in favor of Lucas’ team. After speaking to his mom and others, we stationed ourselves at the fence to take pictures and mask our disappointment.

We watched the remainder of the game, which was largely one sided. When the score climbed to 9-0, the referee invoked the “mercy rule,” and the game ended 20 minutes into the second half. Now we were even more disappointed. We had traveled all

Continued on Page 17

Continued from Page 16

day to make it to this game and only saw Lucas play for 20 minutes.

The next morning, we woke up and discussed changing hotels, but the options were limited and prices elsewhere were doubled. We decided to stay one more night in the less-than-desirable location and in the hotel that had seen better days.

While getting ready for the day, my phone dinged a couple times. Greg picked it up and said there were texts from folks at church. A little later I picked up the phone and read a text from Pastor Dieter Punt that included a comment from the church's Facebook page.

It was a "thank you" message from someone named Sean Weeks who had received a quilt made by our church quilting group following a tornado that had destroyed his house. There have been so many tornadoes this year. It was good to know that some of our quilts had reached people in need. I looked at the town listed on Sean's post and noticed that it was Wynne, Arkansas. I located Wynne on Google maps and saw that it was 60 miles and a little more than an hour away from our hotel.

As I told Greg this wonderful story of someone who took time in the middle of their own troubles to thank us, I was drawn to the TV in our room which was on the local news. The reporter was in Wynne, Arkansas, and was talking about the tornado damage and recovery. When Greg asked what I wanted to do that day, my response was, without hesitation, "I want to go to Wynne, Arkansas." In his true traveling companion fashion, he was all for the adventure. We left within the hour and drove to a nearby Aldi, my go-to for grocery supplies for the backpack program. We bought as many of our regular backpack items as we could, loaded our car, and were on our way. My thought was that if we found no place to donate the food in Wynne, we would take the items home to fill the food bags that our church team delivers to 100 elementary school students weekly.



We got on I-40 and headed west. After only a couple skirmishes between us about my poor navigating skills and Greg's difficulty reading interstate signs, we found ourselves in flat Arkansas. There were massive farms with plowed fields and a few houses scattered on the pancake flat landscape. We continued on our westward jaunt feeling a little like the Blues Brothers ("on a mission from God"). I was never sure what we were going to accomplish other than delivering a little food and seeing real tornado damage.

I didn't know much about what had happened to Wynne on March 31 other than that some houses were destroyed and four people were killed. As I continued to search Facebook for our quilt recipient, Sean Weeks, I stumbled on a post showing a picture of a face trapped under rubble. I was stunned as I read through the post. That face belonged to Sean Weeks, the man who took the time to say "thank you" to our church group for a quilt.

I learned that Sean was trapped in the rubble for over five hours during the tornado that destroyed his home. While rescuers were attempting to save him from his entrapment, a second storm interrupted their efforts. Instead of choosing safety for themselves, his rescuers held a tarp over him and stayed with him until the storm passed, risking their own lives in the process.

Continued on Page 18

Continued from Page 17

Sean's quote at the end of his Facebook post was "There's no reason I should be alive except for God."

Our mission of food delivery was changing. Now it seemed to be important to find Sean Weeks and thank him for his gratitude and his witnessing.

As we approached Wynne, we saw little evidence of any disaster. Houses and lawns were intact. Trees were standing. We did find it unusual that we passed Crowley's Ridge Country Club and a sign indicating that we had been driving down Crowley's Ridge Parkway. After turning onto Falls Boulevard, we started seeing the area of major devastation. A church with massive damage had lost its steeple and suffered major damage. There were a few folks under a small tent in the front lawn giving away free hot dogs and offering prayer. The area across the street that used to be a neighborhood was full of dump trucks and excavators removing massive trees and destroyed houses. Other businesses were unscathed and operating as usual. The high school, which was just past the church, seemed to have major damage. McDonald's and Sonic were both up and running with no impact.

I decided to call Mary Bates, NALC Disaster Response coordinator, to find out what group here had received our quilts. She answered and I briefly told her the story and where I was. She told me that NALC had delivered an 18-foot trailer of goods from the Statesville, North Carolina, warehouse to a distribution center on Murray Street in Wynne. We were at the gas station a block away. We took our food items to the distribution center where they



Sean Weeks trapped beneath rubble.

were unloaded by some nice young National Guard personnel. We asked the folks there about Sean Weeks but got no answers. It felt good to find a place to leave the food.

We then headed to McDonald's for lunch and encountered a group of women wearing FEMA jackets. I asked if they knew how we might contact a displaced person. The woman I spoke with had lived in Charlotte just a couple miles from where we lived for eight years. She gave me contact information for another group of people who might be able to help.



I went back to Facebook for one more search and found the page for Sean Weeks. His employer was listed. I called them and was told he no longer worked there. I told my story to the nice lady who answered the phone, and she gave me numbers for Sean and his wife Kimberly. I called Sean and got no answer. I then called Kimberly and was so excited when she answered the phone.

Continued on Page 19



Continued from Page 18

After telling her the story of how I was a quilter from North Carolina who happened to be in Wynne, I asked if I could meet her. She was so kind and gave me the address of friends that she and Sean were staying with. We headed to Evelyn Avenue, which came right after Mildred Street (Mildred was my mother's name).

Sean had come from work and was waiting for us in the driveway. After meeting Kimberly and their host John, we heard more of their story. Sean was trapped under a large tree which had fallen through the house that was totally destroyed. He told us that he knows God spared him so he could share his experience and faith with others. We asked if they were able to salvage anything. Friends had retrieved some of their clothes. Sean left the room and came back with two undamaged champagne glasses from their wedding. He told us they were standing on a shelf on either side of their Bible. That spot in the house was not damaged during the storm. What a wonderful story of faith in God! We prayed with them for their continued safety and recovery.

It was an amazing day. We left refreshed and renewed. The minor inconveniences, disappointments and dissatisfactions of the days before were gone. These good folks who had lost everything took the time to send a simple message of gratitude. What a difference they made for us. Our trip was still about watching our grandson play soccer, but it was now about so much more. It was about being thankful for all that we have instead of always wanting better and more. It was about appreciating the protections that are ours everyday. It was about the God who offers hope to all who turn to Him. We continue to pray for the people of this small town and many others like them around the country. We are so happy that our congregation participates in ministries that help others in need.

We did get to have a nice dinner with our grandson and got to watch him play a full game on Thursday. As the game started, clouds gathered and I worried just a little about severe weather. It rained steadily during the game. We were fine under our umbrella. Before the game ended, the rain stopped and a full rainbow appeared. We saw it as another reminder of God's care and promises.

Wynne, Arkansas, is a town of about 8,100 people. The F3 tornado that struck the town on March 31 at 4 p.m. took the lives of four individuals and injured 26 others. Approximately 80 homes were totally destroyed and many others were badly damaged. Churches, businesses and schools were damaged or destroyed. The tornado followed a path of 73 miles with winds reaching 150 mph.

The next Sunday Pastor Punt's sermon focused on hope. We saw the cross in the picture as we drove into Wynne. The cross was carved by a local pastor out of the trunk of a tree toppled by the tornado. The only word carved on the cross is "Hope."

Last week, I shared this story with the ladies who pack and distribute food bags. Jennifer Blevins, helps with backpacks every week. At the end of the story, she opened her phone and showed us a picture of her nephew from a Facebook post she received that day. He works for Tyson Foods in Arkansas. It was a picture of him standing at a grill in Wynne preparing chicken for the victims of the tornado. The story of hope continues.

NALC ONLINE CONFIRMATION IS UP AND RUNNING

The NALC's new online confirmation program has started and is going strong. Online meetings began in February. We have seven students and three pastors working with the program.

The pastors are the Rev. Teresa Peters, director of Youth and Family Ministry, the Rev. Shruti Kulkarni of Rivers Edge Ministries in Mount Airy, Maryland, and the Rev. Mark Braaten, Southern Area assistant to the bishop.

We have a weekly meeting on Zoom where we have been focusing on the Bible, prayer, and who Jesus is – plus lots of time for our group to get to know each other. The weekly gatherings will run through early May, take the summer off, and resume again in early September.

In the fall we plan to begin working our way through Luther's Small Catechism with continued focus on all the previous topics.

In addition, the students are asked to participate in the ministry of their home congregation. Beginning in the fall we will have the students find an adult mentor in their congregation to work with. We are



YOUTH AND FAMILY

REV. TERESA PETERS
DIRECTOR OF YOUTH
AND FAMILY MINISTRY

setting up a comprehensive program, but also having a lot of fun.

The program is for two years. We hope to be flexible enough that students can join our NALC program if a pastoral vacancy occurs in their home congregation or that students can shift from the online program back to their home congregation when the congregation is able to again offer confirmation.

We have seven incredible students who are making our program a joy to work with.

One important note: this NALC program is not meant to try to replace confirmation as a congregational ministry. Ideally confirmation is done

in the congregation. But we know that we, as the NALC, have a number of congregations that are without a pastor or only have a student or two to participate in confirmation. Our NALC online program is meant to be an option for those congregations and for other circumstances that come up.

We have had numerous inquiries from congregations and parents about joining in the fall. Fall will be a great time to join. We will be doing registration this summer for new students to join us.

Continued on Page 21



Continued from Page 20

Pastors, if you would like to help, please let us know. We are planning over the summer to set up a number of new online groups to accommodate additional students. For more information about this program, or to register, please contact Pastor Mark Braaten at southernab@thenalc.org or Pastor Teresa Peters at tpeters@thenalc.org.

We are pleased to be able to offer this new ministry. Confirmation has a long and valued place in our Lutheran tradition, it continues to be a vital component of youth ministry for our Church today. Please pray for this venture and check out what we are doing.

NALC NEXUS update

NALC NEXUS week – June 16-22 – is halfway to full registration!

The NEXUS Institute exists to transform the landscape of the Lutheran Church through innovative and intentional development of young adults who want to be more involved in the nexus of faith, life and the Church.

The institute is a life-changing opportunity where young adults engage in theological learning, leadership development, and vocational discernment, all in the context of intentional Christian community, and are sent out to transform their local communities.

Pastors, youth directors, parents and guardians: now is the time to be chatting with your high school students about applying for this epic experience.

GRAND VIEW UNIVERSITY



Know a student who wants to work in ministry, or who should? Send them over to grandview.edu/NEXUS or have them email nexus@grandview.edu for more information. It's going to be an great time of learning, connecting, and discerning on Grand View University's beautiful campus they'll remember forever.



WE BELONG
"I KNOW MY OWN AND MY OWN KNOW ME"

NALC Continental Youth Gathering update

Planning is well underway for our first NALC Continental Youth Gathering. We are getting lots of questions and, unfortunately, we cannot answer them all at this time. What we can tell you is this:

Date: July 1-4, 2024.

Location: St. John's Lutheran Church in Boerne, Texas (near San Antonio).

Theme: We Belong.

Ages: Youth participants ages 12-18; Young adult leaders in training ages 19-24. One adult leader (age 25 and over) for each seven youth.

Accommodations: Each group will be responsible for making their own accommodation arrangements. There will be different housing options available for at a variety of costs. More information will be included in the registration package.

Cost is \$250 per person for youth and team leaders, which includes the program costs, T-shirts, excursion, missions, most food and transportation. Transportation to and from Boerne, Texas, will be on your own. We offer a reduced registration rate of \$175 for leaders in training. Registration will open in October of 2023.

Watch the NALC website for updates and additional information at thenalc.org/cyg.

FAITHFUL WORSHIP AND SPIRITUAL AWAKENING II

When (Jesus) was at table with them, He took the bread and blessed, and broke it, and gave it to them. And their eyes were opened and they recognized Him; and He vanished out of their sight. They said to each other, "Did not our hearts burn within us while He talked to us on the road, while He opened to us the scriptures?" – Luke 24:30-32 RSV

After introducing you to Bishop Bo Giertz's writings on faithful worship and spiritual awakening in the last issue of the NALC News, I heard Dr. David Luy, newly installed NALS professor and theologian, mention the same topic, which he highlights in a vision document for the North American Lutheran Seminary. As I am suggesting that *both* faithful worship and spiritual awakening are needed in the NALC today, I asked Dr. Luy if he would elaborate on his perspective on Giertz. He graciously responded, writing:

In sum, my love for Giertz is rooted in a general concern I have that Lutherans (perhaps in North America especially) have a tendency to create false dichotomies within their own tradition, and the result is a proliferation of tribalism which does not serve the mission of the church very well. The section on worship in "A Shepherd's Letter" is, for me, an especially insightful example of how Giertz helps us to transcend these dichotomies. His approach is satisfying because he doesn't simply ask us to "agree to disagree" – nor is his vision for the church simply to juxtapose, or "staple together" different worship styles. On the contrary, his embrace of liturgy and spiritual awakening is robustly theological in its approach – i.e., each of these "forms" (for lack of a better term) must be understood as necessary evocations by divine address, and legitimate manifestations of the same Spirit's work among His people. On the basis of that capacious, theological framework, he then helps us to see that both liturgy and spiritual awakening are susceptible to their own peculiar deformations and



MINISTRY MATTERS

REV. DR. DAVID WENDEL
ASSISTANT TO THE BISHOP
FOR MINISTRY AND ECUMENISM

distortions. Somewhat paradoxically, the distortion on either side takes root precisely when that form of response to divine address hardens (in an antagonistic manner) over against the alternative form (i.e., liturgy against spiritual awakening; or spiritual awakening against liturgy).

Dr. Luy's assertion that *both* liturgy and spiritual awakening are susceptible to their own peculiar deformations and distortions speaks into the reality in much of North American Lutheranism and the NALC.

Solid, confessional Lutheran liturgy and worship are not at odds with spiritual awakening, but each can become a goal in and of itself, exclusive of the other. In other words, a focus on liturgy and proper form in worship can certainly stifle an awareness of and openness to the Spirit of the Risen Jesus Christ who enlightens and gives new life to minds, hearts and mission. At the same time, a focus on spiritual awakening without the proper attention to worship in the community grounded in historic, faithful forms that communicate the Means of Grace, the Word and the Sacraments, can leave the congregation without the Traditionally Groundedness which provides for growing ministry that is founded on "apostolic teaching and fellowship, the breaking of bread and prayer" (Acts 2:42).

Continued on Page 23

And lest we miss the point — faithful worship and spiritual awakening are all about Jesus Christ, crucified and risen, present in the community of disciples — wherever two or three are gathered in His name. As with the resurrection appearances of the Lord in the early Church, transformation, awakening, new life, new energy and enthusiasm happened only through an experience of Jesus, risen from death. The inspired preaching and evangelical outreach of the apostles came, not as a result of their own actions or commitment, but because the Risen Jesus came to them, and it was His presence and power, shared with the Church through the gift of the Holy Spirit, that elicited their response — as they were sent to go, make disciples, baptize and teach.

In short, in faithful worship focused on Word and Sacrament, the Risen Christ Jesus is present with and for His people, the Church. His presence awakens and stirs the hearts, minds and lives of His Body so that empowered and energized, they go forth to serve. Faithful liturgy and worship embodies the real presence of Jesus crucified and risen, and it is that embodiment, the incarnate presence of Jesus in the Means of Grace, which touch and transform — awaken, spiritually — those who are dead. These two are not exclusive but are intimately related and cannot, dare not be separated!

Bishop Giertz, in “A Shepherd’s Letter,” concludes:

Now this means that we give both awakening and liturgy their rightful, early Christian places in congregational life. We always need awakening, not only because the church must always be a missionary church reaching out to those who stand outside, but also because the church’s most faithful members also need awakening. Every old Adam is similarly inclined to doze off, to turn the Christian life into a dead routine, to use the forms of the liturgy as a means to cocoon oneself in complacency and unrepentance ... The Holy Spirit always needs to awaken slumbering souls, stir up the dust, send the old Adam packing, and breathe new life into dead bones.

So, here are a few questions which might be asked within every congregation of the NALC: Are we giving both awakening and liturgy their rightful, early Christian places in our congregational life? Are we focused on right liturgy and form, but asleep to the real presence of Christ in our midst? Do we use the forms of the liturgy as a means to cocoon ourselves in complacency and unrepentance, or are we open to the Holy Spirit awakening our slumbering souls, stirring up the dust, sending the old Adam packing, breathing new life into our dead bones?

May the presence of the Risen Christ Jesus, in our faithful liturgy and worship, awaken us and inspire us to mission and ministry!



ORDINATION

Adam Guthmiller was ordained on April 29 at First Lutheran Church in Sioux Falls, South Dakota. He was installed as pastor of First English Lutheran Church in Lennox, South Dakota, on April 30.

U.S. CONFERENCE OF CATHOLIC BISHOPS AND NALC MEET FOR ECUMENICAL EXCHANGE

The first in-person, post-pandemic ecumenical exchange between the North American Lutheran Church and representatives of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops Committee for Ecumenical and Interreligious Affairs (BCEIA) took place on Thursday, March 16, in Chicago.

Although such an exchange had been an almost annual occurrence, the pandemic and staff changes delayed such an in-person meeting.

The last exchange took place in October of 2018. Representing the USCCB at this year's meeting were the Most Rev. David P. Talley, bishop of Memphis and current chair of the BCEIA; the Most Rev. Joseph C. Bambera, bishop of Scranton and the chair-elect of the BCEIA; the Most Rev. John Michael Botean, bishop of the Romanian Catholic Diocese-Eparchy of St. George in Canton, Ohio; the Rev. Walter Kedjierski, executive director of the BCEIA; Dr. Anthony Cirelli, associate director of the BCEIA, Rebecca Cohen, BCEIA research specialist, and the Rev. Donald Rooney, pastor of St. Bernadette Parish in Springfield, Virginia, and president of the Catholic Association of Diocesan Ecumenical and Interreligious Officers.

Representing the NALC were Bishop Dan Selbo and Pastor David Wendel, assistant to the bishop for ministry and ecumenism.

This was Bishop Selbo's first opportunity to meet with representatives of the USCCB and the BCEIA.

While updates were shared regarding our ministry, the primary focus of the meeting was to reconnect



Participants in the USCCB-NALC discussion pose for a group photo.

and to meet with USCCB representatives newly appointed or elected since the 2018 meeting.

The exchange began with lunch, followed by cordial and honest conversation regarding current challenges in our increasingly secular culture, similarities facing all our congregations and parishes, ending the conversation with hope and joy as we are bolstered by our faith in Jesus Christ our Savior and Lord.

An unscheduled, spontaneous time was spent with participants remembering personal experiences and appreciation for the late Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI who had warmly welcomed NALC Bishop John Bradosky, Bishop Emeritus Paull Spring and Pastor Wendel during a weekly audience at the Vatican in September of 2011.

The hope is to return to a regular pattern of annual exchanges, with an invitation from BCEIA staff extended to visit their office in Washington, D.C. when in the area.