



2012 Convocation

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2012 North American Lutheran Church Convocation

Report of the Bishop

Grace and peace to you from God our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ,

We always thank God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, when we pray for you, because we have heard of your faith in Christ Jesus and of the love you have for all the saints—the faith and love that spring from the hope that is stored up for you in heaven and that you have already heard about in the word of truth, the gospel that has come to you. All over the world this gospel is bearing fruit and growing, just as it has been doing among you since the day you heard it and understood God’s grace in all its truth. You learned it from Epaphras, our dear fellow servant, who is a faithful minister of Christ on our behalf, and who also told us of your love in the Spirit. For this reason, since the day we heard about you, we have not stopped praying for you and asking God to fill you with the knowledge of his will through all spiritual wisdom and understanding. And we pray this in order that you may live a life worthy of the Lord and may please him in every way: bearing fruit in every good work, growing in the knowledge of God, being strengthened with all power according to his glorious might so that you may have great endurance and patience, and joyfully giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of the saints in the kingdom of light. For he has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son he loves, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins. (Colossians 1:3-14)

I begin my report to you with sincere thankfulness for your prayerful support. I am sustained in this ministry through our Lord’s gracious answers to your prayers. My inexperience in filling this office is bound to show and would be more pronounced were it not for the wisdom and consistent contact with Bishop Emeritus Paull Spring and a number of other former bishops who graciously offer their counsel and advice. It is a great blessing to function in a collegial capacity with a gifted staff committed to the values of the North American Lutheran Church and selfless sacrificial service to this church. Our staff now includes:

Rev. Mark Chavez, General Secretary
Rev. Gemechis Buba, Assistant to the Bishop for Mission
Rev. David Wendel, Assistant to the Bishop for Ministry and Ecumenism
Becky Seifert, Assistant to the Executive Staff
Anne Gleason, Financial Administrator
Rachel Sosebee, Administrative Assistant for Missions
Kathy Jacobson, Administrative Assistant

In addition to our staff, it has been my pleasure to work with a gifted group of leaders in our Executive Council. They are in constant contact, deliberating weekly, keeping the NALC responsive to needs and demands of pastors and congregations, and creating policies that assist in making us even more effective in living out our values.

Another indispensable group of leaders that keep our ministry effective and offer personal support and guidance to pastors and congregations are the Deans of each of our Mission Districts. Like our Executive Council, these are unpaid positions. The Deans are elected by their Mission Districts to serve the NALC, caring for each of the congregations in their Mission District while continuing to lead their own congregation. In addition to extending our sincere appreciation to them, we also offer our thanks to their congregations who are willing to share the time and gifts of their pastors in order to encourage and care for other congregations. This work is time consuming and often emotionally draining. While grateful for your prayers for me, I covet your prayers for our staff, Executive Council and Deans.

Still others must be commended for their faithful service on our committees focused on Missions, Candidacy, Communications, Nominations, Joint Commission on Theology and Doctrine, Court of Adjudication, the Task Force for Theological Education, the NALC Canadian Commission, and the Women of the NALC.

Time spent with each of these groups has been encouraging. Their commitment to Christ and this church through these “labors of love” is inspirational and keeps us growing stronger in our witness and more effective in ministry.

For better or worse, I approach this office from the perspective of a parish pastor with a passion for encouraging and challenging congregations to faithfully follow Christ as His disciples, fulfilling His mission to reach the entire world with the Gospel proclaimed in word and deed and lead all who are willing to follow Him by faith into the most meaningful and abundant life possible, life in Christ. Therefore, no other part of my work is as exciting and as meaningful as time spent in our individual congregations, meeting with pastors and lay leaders, worshipping together, sharing the Eucharist, participating in baptisms, confirmations, ordinations, installations and other significant celebrations in the their lives. It is equally exciting to be present at Mission District Convocations, meeting personally with pastors and other lay leaders, understanding the struggles and opportunities in their context. In those moments together the stresses of time and travel vanish. We continue to make time to meet with congregations just beginning the struggle with the decision-making process to join the NALC. While I am seldom a participant in funerals, I continue to assist others in dealing with the loss and grief involved in taking those steps. I do so confident of the hope, promise and new life that await them.

This is where I see the greatest evidence of what the Apostle Paul is writing about in his words from the first chapter of Colossians. The Gospel is growing and bearing fruit among you because of your faith in Jesus Christ and your love for all the saints. It is a faith and love that spring from the hope and assurance in the promises of Christ—forgiveness, redemption, salvation, eternal life with Him—that is manifest even now through His presence in the power and work of the Holy Spirit. Your confidence in the absolute truth of that Gospel has resulted in your bold proclamation of this truth and a commitment to live in that truth. That life you share as a community of faith is having a profound impact on the lives of others. As you grow deeper in your love for Christ and faith in Christ, you are strengthened in your witness and influence on the culture around you. That experience is just as profound in my time with well-established larger congregations as it is with a small group meeting in a home and beginning the journey of establishing a mission post.

While it is impossible to provide commentary on each of the events that have consumed my time in the past year serving with you, I will attempt to offer a list of some of the more significant experiences.

- Established Mission District boundaries
- Meeting with all Mission District Deans
- Established endorsing agency for military chaplaincy through agreement with Augsburg Lutheran Churches
- Taskforce on Theological Education
- Formation of NALC Canadian Commission
- Finalizing our Lutheran Benefits program for health care and 403b contributions
- New NALC Video
- Ecumenical efforts:
 - Meeting in Rome with Pope Benedict XVI and other members of the Pontifical Council on Ecumenism
 - Meetings with leaders of the Anglican Church of North America
 - Meetings with Lutheran Church–Missouri Synod leaders

- Meetings with Augsburg Lutheran Churches
- Established liaison with Augustana District of LCMC
- Application for membership in Lutheran World Federation
- Lutheran World Relief board representation
- Continuing support for Lutheran CORE
- Evangelism and World Mission Conference in Tustin, CA (Presenter)
- Staff additions
- Office space and infrastructure changes
- Personnel policies handbook and similar resource for congregations
- Strategic planning process with Executive Council
- Meetings with Joint Commission on Theology and Doctrine
- International Mission and Theological Conference in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia (Presenter)
- Canadian Theological Conference (Preacher)
- Meetings with ACR – Association for Church Renewal in Washington DC (Presenter)
- Agreements with two ACNA Seminaries – Trinity School for Ministry and Nashotah House
- Discipleship retreat and seminar in Texas (Presenter)
- Revitalization Conference – Lake Junaluska, North Carolina (Presenter)
- Work in establishing and encouraging mission congregations
- Multiple Mission District Convocations (Presenter)

I trust that other faithful leaders will deliver even more details from this list as well as additional information in their reports.

Above all, I want you to know that I have been praying for you. Each day I have prayed specifically for our pastors and congregations by name. When I am powerless to do little else to support you, I rely on the far greater power and work of the Holy Spirit through prayer to offer you what I could never provide. I began with that passage from Colossians because it provides the framework of my prayers for you. I pray:

† For the Holy Spirit to give you confidence in the absolute truth of the Gospel so your faith, love and hope would flourish;

† For boldness and urgency in proclaiming the Gospel of Jesus Christ in word and deed;

† For the life-giving commitment to follow Christ faithfully and to lead others to become his disciples, realizing that as others helped you to hear the Gospel and grow in your faith, you cannot respond by doing any less;

† For God to fill you with knowledge of His will, spiritual wisdom and understanding that you might grow in the knowledge of God, strengthened with the power of the Holy Spirit, manifest in endurance, patience and joy;

† For growth and bearing fruit as you engage in good works that share the love of Christ and strengthen our witness in the world and throughout your community;

† For encouragement to live a life worthy of one serving the Lord, pleasing Him in every way;

† For healing and comfort in the midst of trials and loss you are sure to face, that in our most profound moments of weakness Christ is our greatest strength. May He guide you to use what you have learned through enduring loss to comfort others;

† For peace and assurance in your redemption, salvation and your place with all the saints, not through any merit of your own but only through the Grace that is ours through faith in Christ Jesus our Lord. Amen

I am certain of Christ's presence in your life and work as congregations of the North American Lutheran Church, and I am deeply honored and humbled to serve with you in this role.

I am blessed to be with you following Christ,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "John". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "J" and a trailing flourish.

Bishop John F. Bradosky

2012 North American Lutheran Church Convocation

Report of the General Secretary

Exceptional Team of Leaders

My joy and privilege as General Secretary is working daily with an exceptional team of leaders throughout the NALC. We are blessed with very faithful and gifted leaders in every area of our life together – congregational leaders, Deans, Executive Council, Court of Adjudication, various committees and task forces, and staff. I am humbled by their hard work and strong commitment to help the NALC be Christ-centered, mission-driven, traditionally-grounded and congregationally-focused.

Many of my responsibilities include working with committees and groups whose reports are included in the reports to this Convocation. I would like to thank those leaders for their significant contributions to the NALC's mission. Thanks to the Candidacy Committee, the Communications team, the Canadian Commission, and the Women's Council of the Women of the NALC for all that they do.

Our administrative staff in Ohio and Minnesota is stretched to its limits with the responsibilities we place upon them. They bear the load cheerfully and gracefully. We are much in debt to Anne Gleason, Kathy Jacobson, Becky Seifert and Rachel Sosebee, so thank them at every opportunity.

Finally, thanks to our executive staff, including Bp. Emeritus Paull Spring who continues to serve in many important ways. My transition into the NALC last fall was made much easier by all the work that Bps. Spring and Bradosky and Pr. Buba had done in the first year of the NALC, and Pr. David Wendel has been a most welcome addition this year.

Certification of Pastors

The NALC continues to be a very attractive Lutheran church for already-ordained pastors, active and retired. Most are Lutheran pastors, but a fair number are from other denominations and traditions. I average a couple of inquiries per week from pastors who are interested in being certified as an NALC pastor. The pace has been so brisk that I have not been able to respond as quickly as I would like to some of the inquiries, nor complete the process for some in a timely manner. Without the support of the Mission District Deans, who have conducted most of the certification interviews, the process would have been unmanageable. Thank you, Deans!

Of course this is good news for the NALC. Congregations who want to call biblically-grounded, evangelically-minded pastors will have strong candidates to consider. The pastors coming into the NALC represent a good mix of age and years of experience, including younger pastors.

Lutheran Benefits

Words cannot express the deep level of gratitude deserved by Verlyn and Kelly Hahn and their highly competent and helpful team at the Hahn Financial Group in Sioux Falls, SD. Not only did they put together an excellent package of overall health and pension benefits last fall, but they also responded very quickly when we needed to get people enrolled by January 1. Their level of service then and since has been exceptional. Lutheran Benefits is off to a good start and we will work with the Hahn Financial Group to make improvements.

Here is a summary of the current status of Lutheran Benefits as of early August:

Lutheran Benefits Health Plan

- 248 individuals (151 congregations) – currently enrolled in health plan
- 8 individuals (6 congregations) – currently enrolled in non-health package
- Our first Renewal/Change Period will occur from 11/1 to 11/22/2012. Changes in Dental/Vision/Salary amounts will all be documented during this time. Changes can be made without a qualifying event.
- We are working on finding a disability vendor who can cover the classes of employees who are not on the health plan, with no medical underwriting. Our current work-around is a fully underwritten product.
- We will receive our renewal rates in early October. The estimate is for high single digit increases for the health insurance and low single digit increases for the other health benefits.

Lutheran Benefits 403(b)9 Retirement Plan

- Individuals eligible to participate (based on the congregation enrolling and submitting a census of eligible employees) – 427; participating – 239 (60% participation)
- Congregations enrolled – 172; remitting contributions – 134
- Total plan funds under management: \$34,182,468
- We will be changing our TPA (Third Party Administrator) from DCS to Mid-America. With the change, Mid-America will require us to move to ACH withdrawals (same as our health plan). More of the actual administration will move to OneAmerica. The cost for the new TPA/OneAmerica combination will be higher, but the Hahn Financial Group will pay for the increase, so the cost to the participants will not change.

Relief and Disaster Ministries

We are blessed with Lutheran relief and disaster ministries in North America that do good work internationally and domestically, and do so in the name of Jesus Christ. For international relief, congregations in the United States can support Lutheran World Relief (lwr.org) and in Canada, Canadian Lutheran World Relief (clwr.org). Both organizations are pan-Lutheran. They provide emergency relief, economic, agricultural and community development, and other services in many countries around the world. They have a good track record of dealing with the root causes of poverty so their ministries are continuously effective, not just in times of emergencies.

Lutheran World Relief works with the Lutheran Church–Missouri Synod (LCMS) in the Lutheran Malaria Initiative (LMI), which is mobilizing Lutherans in the United States in support of an international effort to end one million malaria deaths annually in Africa. LMI “works through local partners to educate families on malaria, increase access to treatment, and provide prevention tools such as bed nets.”

For domestic relief in the United States, the NALC is working with Disaster Services – Lutheran Social Services of Central Ohio. Mary Woodward, who heads that office, has been a pioneer in improving rapid and effective response to domestic disasters. She developed a training program for congregations so they can be prepared before a disaster happens and can quickly join the relief effort following a disaster. She also developed a trailer-mounted mobile shower system, with multiple showers, that operates off a simple garden hose connection.

The NALC will be coordinating its work with Mary Woodward in cooperation with LCMS World Relief and Human Care and its disaster response ministry. The coordination will include relief efforts after a disaster and training programs for congregations so that they are prepared before a disaster occurs in their community. Look for more information in the coming months about the training programs.

In keeping with the NALC's mission and stewardship paradigms we want congregations to work directly with the international and domestic relief and disaster ministries. It is far more efficient and effective for congregations to develop those direct relationships for cooperation and financial support, than sending funds to the NALC for disbursement to relief and disaster ministries.

Legal Work

Our lead attorney, Martin Nussbaum, and his assistant, Joan Rennekamp, at Rothgerber Johnson & Lyons LLP in Colorado Springs, CO, have been very helpful in the past year. Mr. Nussbaum has provided a good outline of the overall legal issues that churches need to consider and he has advised our task force that is developing the NALC's discipline process.

Ms. Rennekamp and I are very near to finishing the personnel handbook for the NALC offices and staff. She has provided an excellent draft of a template for a congregational personnel handbook. Our goal is to make the congregational template available by September.

Investment Fund for Missions

Some NALC members have requested the NALC offer an investment fund in the United States for congregations and individuals that would be used for loans for mission (and other) congregations who are buying property or beginning a building program. After some initial inquiries with financial institutions we learned that the NALC would need to create its own fund. The LCMS leadership offered the assistance of their Lutheran Church Extension Fund staff, so Anne Gleason, Ryan Schwarz and I met with several of their staff. They were extremely helpful in outlining all the steps involved in establishing, maintaining and using such a fund.

We learned that the lending side of such a fund is relatively straight-forward, but the investment side is much more complicated. The main issue is that some states have a high level of regulation for such funds, which make it very difficult for a start-up fund. The LCMS leaders advised that when we are ready to begin, we start in those states that take a hands-off approach to such funds. Unfortunately, those states, with a couple of exceptions, are not states in which we have a lot of U.S. congregations.

The establishment of this fund remains a long-term goal. We will begin by recruiting some volunteers with professional experience in the investment and lending fields that can begin work on a plan for establishing the fund.

Association for Church Renewal (ACR)

The ACR was formally organized in 1996, but grew out of an informal support network of leaders of confessing and renewal movements in some of the mainline traditions. Initially Methodist, Episcopal, Presbyterian and Congregational/Reformed leaders composed the network, but over the years expanded into other traditions, including Canadian. It was organized to support leaders and groups working for renewal and reform in the mainline denominations. I have been involved in the ACR since 2001.

At our March 2012 meeting we intentionally shifted the membership of the association to include leaders of newer denominations that grew out of the mainline denominations. Since a significant number of Anglican, Presbyterian and Lutherans are now in new denominations, or are on their way into new denominations, it made sense to expand the association. The purpose is to continue to support those orthodox leaders and groups working in the older mainline denominations and keep them connected in meaningful ways with those in the newer denominations.

In connection with the NALC's and Lutheran CORE's involvement in the ACR, the Anglican leaders have invited Lutherans, Methodists, and Presbyterians to a meeting in October. We will consider concrete ways we can support each other in making a common confession of the Christian faith in a secular culture and making disciples of Christ. I am very hopeful for the outcome of those discussions.

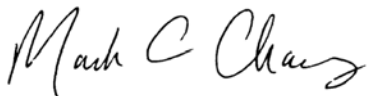
Congregational Reports

Following my report is a statistical summary for the NALC based on the annual congregational reports for 2011. The summary is a work in progress because not all of the congregations completed their reports. This was a completely new experience for most of the mission congregations and for all of us with our first online reporting system. Thanks to all who used the system and gave us good feedback for improving it for next year's report.

The 2011 partial reports indicate that NALC congregations experienced growth in both membership and average worship attendance from 2010 to 2011. That's an unusual experience for most North American denominations. The partial figures also indicate that on average more than 30% of baptized members worshipped each week in NALC congregations. That percentage is significantly greater than other denominational percentages on the continent. These preliminary figures are encouraging signs of the vitality of NALC congregations. Let us pray that our Lord and the Holy Spirit keep our congregations moving in these directions.

We will continue to contact congregations for more complete information as of year-end 2011, because it is essential that we have a baseline for evaluating the NALC's growth going forward.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Mark C Chavez". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Rev. Mark C. Chavez
General Secretary

North American Lutheran Church

Congregational Statistics

The total number of NALC baptized members is greater than 125,000. The summary below only includes data that was submitted by congregations in their 2011 congregational reports. We have gathered by other means the number of baptized members at the end of 2010.

223 of 330 congregations reporting - 68%

<u>Total Membership</u>		Total	Average
2010	Baptized Membership	76,671	351
2011	Baptized Membership	81,503	370
2010	Confirmed Membership	53,839	251
2011	Confirmed Membership	56,455	263

2011 Membership Additions

Infant Baptism	881
Adult Baptism	152
Confirmation	803
Transfer In	1,610
Affirmation of Faith	965

2011 Membership Removals

Death	842
Transfer Out	1,262
Other	2,310

Worship Attendance

2010	Average Attendance	114
2011	Average Attendance	118

Geographic Setting

Farming area	42
Small town or rural	121
Metropolitan area	22
Suburb of large city	28

Affiliate Membership

LCMC	39
ELCA	10

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2012 North American Lutheran Church Convocation

Report of the Assistant to the Bishop for Missions

Jesus went through all the towns and villages, teaching in their synagogues, proclaiming the good news of the kingdom and healing every disease and sickness. When he saw the crowds, he had compassion on them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. Then he said to his disciples, “The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field.” Matthew 9:35-38

The North American Lutheran Church has four core values. One of those values is being ‘mission driven.’ *Driven* is a dynamic word describing movement, activity, duty and mobility, and it describes our church—we are truly mission driven. We are centered in Christ, grounded in tradition, focused on congregations and driven with a very clear mission of making disciples of all nations.

The North American Lutheran Church fulfills its mission work through five major mission and ministry outlets: **New Mission Plants, Renewal of Congregations, International Missions, Great Commission Society of the NALC, and Ethnic Ministry Strategies.**

New Mission Plants

Planting and nurturing new mission congregations are central to the NALC mission office’s work. There are five entry points into planting new mission congregations:

- **Mission Posts:** This is where fewer than ten families are interested in joining the NALC but are not in a position to have their own worship place, pastoral leader and full mission plan. They gather for prayer, worship and mutual support. In this way we acknowledge mission groups regardless of size and honor people’s faithfulness. We come alongside them to help focus their energy towards the possibility of growing into a mission congregation.
- **House Churches:** More organized than mission posts, house churches frequently meet at a particular site for prayer and planning. They gather in people’s homes, coffee shops, etc. Usually their objective is to gather a critical mass and move to the next mission type. They usually do not have a pastor and often are lay led. They may have a pastor once or twice a month for communion and preaching.
- **Mission Fellowships:** This group is larger than a house church, usually around 30+ people. They have a worship site, a mission plan, a mission budget, and a core group of leaders. They meet once or twice a week for worship, Bible study, and prayer meetings. They have strong lay leadership but usually do not have a called mission pastor.
- **Mission congregations:** This is a fully organized mission with a mission plan, budget, designated mission site and a full-time or part-time mission pastor dedicated to the mission.
- **Mission branching:** This is a situation in which an organized congregation branches out to start another mission congregation.

The main actors and drivers in planting new mission congregations in the NALC are our organized congregations, mission districts, visionary lay or ordained leaders, and groups that have self-organized for various reasons. In order to facilitate, advance and enhance this work our office helps these mission plants through the following seven mission-driven activities.

1. **Entry:** Identifying and settling the mission status of the group is the first step. All of our mission congregations fall into one of the above entry points. All future steps are based on the nature of the mission’s entry point and status.

2. **Training:** Pastors and lay leaders involved in planting mission congregations are invited to attend our yearly mission planters' conference, where leaders receive training on how to nurture and grow their mission congregations. The 2011 conference was held May 10-12 in Houston, TX. In 2013, the congregational renewal and mission planters' conferences will be combined and held in November.
3. **Consultation:** Our missions office works with mission congregations primarily through phone and video consultations. Site visits and ministry visits are conducted as needed.
4. **Continued Coaching:** Follow-up is dependent on the need, nature and context of the ministry. This ministry of coaching or mentoring of mission planter or lay mission leader is done predominantly between neighboring congregations or within the Mission District.
5. **Funding:** Mission funding primarily happens through relationships between mission plants/mission partners. In some cases we do offer funds through seed grants, bridge funds and leader's support. Our funding is to supplement the support mission congregations receive from their mission partners. In 2012 ten grants were awarded to mission congregations.
6. **Commissioning:** Quality leaders make quality missions. For that reason, an integral part of our overall mission work is raising, equipping and commissioning leaders for mission. This is done in two ways: First, by working on congregational leadership development through congregational consultations, regional conferences and congregational retreats, and second, by collaborating with the Assistant to the Bishop for Ministry, Rev. Dr. David Wendel, in the process of calling a mission pastor.
7. **Prayer:** After all is said and done growth can only come from God. Therefore, NALC missions work always depends on the power of the Holy Spirit to see fruits, results and growth in the work of mission. Mutual support among leaders, congregations and our mission team is a critical piece of our work. In addition, prayer partners are praying for our mission congregations and their leaders. Without the Holy Spirit we can do nothing. But with the help of the Holy Spirit nothing is impossible.

There are currently 54 mission congregations within the NALC, with a number in the pipeline yet to be approved and received into the NALC. There is a mission plan and a mission start projection to help our congregations multiply themselves by planting other mission-driven congregations.

Renewal of Congregations

As a congregationally focused church we strongly believe that the renewal of congregations plays a key role in sustaining the mission of the whole church. Therefore, our congregational renewal team works on this vision by offering four avenues of congregational renewal.

1. **Training:** The NALC congregational renewal team offers a comprehensive teaching and networking conference every year. Last year it was at a retreat center in North Carolina. This year the conference is in Columbus, OH, November 7-9. Bishop John Bradosky will offer the keynote address on discipleship and Prof. James Nestingen will offer theological foundations for congregational renewal. There will also be several presenters to share their practical insights. The mission office is also working with Lutheran CORE's Discipleship Events team.
2. **Coaching and Networking:** Renewal is not a solo act. Therefore, the mission office and renewal team facilitate connections between leaders and congregations with coaches, mentors and accountability partners
3. **Renewal resources:** A subgroup of the congregational renewal team locates resources and builds a recommended resource list. Resources come from the team members' personal experiences and are

only suggested resources so leaders can choose what best fits their need, context and mission approach. We constantly revisit and update our resource database to best serve our congregations.

- 4. Spiritual renewal:** Renewal of lives and renewal of congregations can only come from the power and work of the Holy Spirit. Therefore congregations who are intentionally engaged in their own congregational renewal are coached to advance this process with intentional prayer, bible study, small groups, congregational retreats, congregational conferences and openness for the renewing work of the Holy Spirit.

International Missions

The North American Lutheran Church is connected to churches and mission agencies in the US, Canada and many other parts of the world. International mission connections are made through the offices of the NALC and through congregations who pursue global mission as one of their mission focal points.

The international mission work of the NALC mission office is assisted by the international mission team and is concentrated in seven major focus areas:

- 1. Sending missionaries:** The NALC sends missionaries to various parts of the world using international mission agencies such as World Mission Prayer League and East European Mission Network. So far we have sent missionaries to Ecuador (Pr. Didi Panzo and family), Hungary (Pr. Scott Ryll and family) and Ethiopia (Dr. James and Carolyn Nestingen). Pr. Matthew Riak (and family) will be commissioned at this convocation as a missionary to South Sudan. God willing, we will have another missionary going to the Middle East in the coming year. *Our missionaries depend on the support of our congregations; therefore we encourage congregations to directly support our missionaries in the mission field through their respective mission agencies.*
- 2. International Scholarship:** The most vital need many global ministries and churches share with us is their deep desire for missional capacity-building through training and leadership development, and having their students enrolled in orthodox, faithful and Bible-based seminaries is a great help. Currently, we are supporting one evangelist from Ethiopia (Belete Demessew Belay) who is enrolled in the Doctor of Ministry program at Trinity School for Ministry in Ambridge, PA. There are similar desires and requests to help our brothers and sisters in Vietnam and South Sudan.
- 3. Mission agencies:** The NALC mission office works closely with various mission agencies to accomplish most of our mission work. There are a number of international mission agencies approved to be mission partners of the NALC in advancing Christ's mission: World Mission Prayer League, East European Mission Network, and Friends of Madagascar.
- 4. International Mission Collaborations and Visits:** Our mission office works across borders to advance Christ's mission. We have hosted two international mission conferences with the Ethiopian Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. Both conferences were a great success and blessing on both sides of the Atlantic. This collaboration with the EECMY will grow even further as we prepare to receive a delegation of evangelists to join us this fall during the congregational renewal conference in Columbus, OH and at other events nationwide. In addition to that we have a growing relationship with the Swedish Evangelical Mission. SEM is a mission organization with Biblical stands and commitments to mission similar to those of the NALC.
- 5. International Mission Projects:** Our mission office often receives requests for financial help with worthy mission projects. We do what we are able to help such projects succeed. In addition to financial help, we publicize projects throughout our church, thus supporting some of these projects through grants, consultations, visits, networking, publicity and other means. Projects supported

include sending medical equipment to Tanzania; helping the city of Hosanna, Ethiopia; helping mission work in India; assisting our missionaries accomplish their goals; helping victims of radical Islamic violence in Ethiopia (over \$65,000 was raised through the generosity of churches and individuals in the NALC, Lutheran CORE and LCMC); assisting a water drilling project in South Sudan; helping a mission post in Dubai; assisting university students' ministry in Ethiopia; training leaders for mission in partnership with the Swedish Evangelical Mission in Stockholm and Uppsala, Sweden.

6. **Theologians without Borders:** The NALC mission office receives requests for theologians, experienced pastors and gifted Bible teachers to take on short- and long-term commitments to assist our brothers and sisters in their seminaries, colleges and Bible schools. We are working on creating a ministry system called "Theologians Without Borders" to facilitate participation by theologians, pastors and Bible teachers in ministry opportunities that assist emerging and struggling churches around the world. There are exciting plans in motion in this area.
7. **Global Prayer Network:** One commitment we always have with our international partners is to pray for each other. Therefore our mission office is working on establishing a global prayer network to facilitate and create a platform by which churches can pray for each other intentionally and persistently. This task calls us to go beyond casual commitments to prayer. We plan to organize intercessory prayer teams to pray for leaders, missionaries, pastors, evangelists, lay leaders, children and every disciple in the body of Christ.
8. **Congregation-to-congregation matching:** It is the firm position and direction of the NALC since its formation that every congregation has at least one local and one global mission partner. Therefore we encourage congregations to take their own initiative to find connections or to seek the help of our office as needed to facilitate this mission-driven match. There are several congregations who are already enjoying the blessing of those connections. These congregations have created and signed protocols of agreement or covenants. These documents are well developed by expert lawyers such as Jim Gale and Ryan Schwarz; your congregation can get in touch with them and adapt those processes and documents for your use.

Great Commission Society of the NALC

At last year's NALC convocation a vision for the Evangelical Lutheran Mission Society (ELMS) was unveiled. The focus of the mission society was making and mobilizing disciples to advance the work of Christ's great commission. Nearly 100 individuals and many congregations joined and supported this vision. We are deeply grateful.

The society has raised considerable financial resources to support mission congregations, missionaries and various mission projects. In 2011 \$29,139.00 was raised. Through June, 2012 another \$14,538.19 had been raised. These gifts supplement the Great Commission Fund grants given through the NALC. Contributions made to the society were truly a blessing to strengthen and advance mission work this year. So far we have given \$15,000.00 in mission grants. These grants are making great differences.

In addition to mobilizing resources for mission, the leadership team spent time reflecting on the identity, purpose, structure and function of the society. Based on that work, ELMS was renamed *Great Commission Society of NALC (GCS)*. GCS continues to work with the same focus of *making and mobilizing disciples of Jesus*. The chairperson of this team, Mrs. Carolyn Nestingen, will give a brief report at the convocation. We are truly blessed with the leadership team. GCS aims to enlist and mobilize people and resources for domestic and global mission opportunities.

Finally, the goal of having 1,000 individuals and 200 congregations as GCS members continues to stand before us. We solicit your prayers and support as we work towards this goal. Together we can proclaim this precious Gospel of Jesus in our local and global mission territories.

Ethnic Ministry Strategies

We recognize the unique needs and nature of language-specific immigrant ministries. Therefore we have developed an ethnic ministry strategy team. An ethnic ministry plan is not something to be developed by the office; rather, it is formed by leaders of those communities, ministries already happening, and the common issues and shared ministry opportunities discovered by the group. The five dominant groups included are: *Hispanic*, led by Pastor Eddy Perez; *Oromo*, led by Evangelist Challa Baro; *Chinese/Asian*, led by Pastor Joshua Ong; *Sudanese*, led by Pastors Julius Badigo and Matthew Riak; and *Vietnamese*, led by Bishop Van Tran.

The process includes one-on-one consultations, a face-to-face planning summit in Columbus, OH, and follow-up video conferences. The result of this work will be the basis for our ethnic ministry vision and strategy plan to be completed in the fall. Leaders are already implementing the strategies as they continue their daily ministries.

The NALC is already multicultural, multilingual and international. These traits will continue to grow further and stronger as we develop and implement our ethnic ministry strategy. Several NALC pastors and lay leaders are helping our immigrant ministries in multiple ways—serving as fiscal agents, hosts, mission partners, and as mentors, coaches and accountability partners. That is a great testament to those things we can do together.

In the end, the period from September 2011 to August 2012 was a fruitful year. It was a great honor to be called and serve as Assistant to the Bishop for Mission in the North American Lutheran Church. The Lord truly blessed our mission and we were able to bear much fruit for the kingdom of God and for the good of our human family. To God be the Glory!!

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Gemechis D. Buba". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned above the typed name.

The Rev. Dr. Gemechis D. Buba

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2012 North American Lutheran Church Convocation

Report of the Assistant to the Bishop for Ecumenism and Ministry

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ!

I write this report still feeling somewhat the “newbie” in the NALC office, although in a real sense we are all “newbies” in this new Lutheran body. At the same time, we in the NALC have collectively many years of experience in life and in ministry that we bring to our task of creating, strengthening and growing this exciting expression of traditional, confessional, orthodox Lutheranism!

I, too, bring years of experience in life and ministry that I pray will be of some benefit to the NALC. I celebrated my 30th anniversary of ordination this past October, and my 25th year as pastor of Saint Luke’s, Colorado Springs—just before announcing that I had received a call to this new position. It was with sorrow, yet hopeful joy that we parted company.

Having celebrated what became the conclusion of my ministry in Colorado, Susan and I moved to Columbus, Ohio the first week of January, 2012, to begin work as NALC “Ministry Coordinator.” At the May Executive Council meeting in Iowa, my title was changed to “Assistant to the Bishop for Ministry and Ecumenism.” While equally broad, folks do seem to understand “Assistant to the Bishop” more than “Ministry Coordinator”—especially within ecumenical and inter-Lutheran circles. “Assistant to the Bishop for Ministry,” of course, can mean anything, because what isn’t “ministry” in the Church? And truly, that sums up much of my responsibility—“ministry”!

In particular, my areas of responsibility have been “mobility of pastors/congregational vacancies” and “ecumenical and inter-Lutheran relationships.” However, that has also included working with congregations and pastors in transition, in conflict and in growth. In addition, I have also been serving as the staff liaison with the theological education task force. In other words, I assist the bishop in any area of ministry where there is a need for support, encouragement or involvement of executive staff. I fully expect this to grow and develop as needs surface and change in our new church body. Let me now say a few words about each of these areas of ministry.

Call Process within the NALC

I often tell call committees that, in one sense, we’re making this up as we go along. This doesn’t mean we aren’t intentional or knowledgeable about what we’re doing, but it does mean we aren’t simply copying what we had experienced before.

In our call process, we are congregationally-focused, which means congregations have a great deal of freedom, flexibility and independence. Pastoral candidates can surface from within the local area, within the Mission District, from the Clergy Connect website, or from other sources. Congregations may choose to involve themselves in our formal call process, or they may search for candidates independently, apart from our involvement. However, we are finding that most congregations appreciate our process that is open, transparent, accessible, and aimed only at seeking the will of God through the movement of the Holy Spirit to bring the right pastor to the right congregation at the right time. In this regard, it should be said we have no agenda other than this—the right marriage of pastor and parish. We are not gate-keepers nor do we have hidden agendas.

Many find this approach refreshing and new! For this reason, it can also take some adjustment for congregations and pastors not used to such a process. Our call process is not perfect; it does take time,

and it does require diligence and intentionality on the part of congregational call committees and councils. It does work, however, and we are always working to improve the process. We have recently posted our Congregational Profiles and Profiles of Pastors Available for Call forms online. Our Guidelines for the Calling of a Pastor have been on the NALC website for some time. While we hesitate to post vacancies or pastors available for call online, I have created a user-group for pastors in our call process so that vacancies can be shared with them and they can request to be considered at various congregations. It already seems to be a helpful strategy.

At any given time, the number of vacancies (average of 20) seems to balance out the number of pastors available for call (about 20-25). We have had our first vacancies in Canadian congregations and are relying heavily on our NALC pastors in Canada for counsel and guidance in providing candidates for our Canadian congregations. We look forward to having provisional deans in Canada to help develop a smooth calling process between the US and Canada. We hope for and intend for there to be movement of clergy throughout North America without regard to national boundaries as we seek to be a truly continental Lutheran body.

Transition and Conflict

The reality is we came into the NALC as pastors and congregations as the same sinners we were before. This means we have had our instances of intra-congregational conflict and pastor/congregation tension. Much of this grows out of the persistent and in some places pervasive attitude that pastors are mere “employees” or “hired-hands,” rather than called servants of God in partnership with the congregation. I would add that pastors often create tension and conflict by attitudes and actions that are not respectful of congregational leadership and simply put, are not “pastoral.” I have been involved in several situations of transition and conflict within our congregations, working for healing and a way forward, if not for forgiveness and reconciliation.

Since in this life there will always be such conflict and tension within the Body of Christ, we would first encourage all to be aware of and make use of our Lord’s own strategy for addressing sin and brokenness within His body, as recorded in St. Matthew’s Gospel, 18:15-20. If additional help is needed, I encourage pastors and congregations to seek assistance early on before an irreparable breach in the pastor/parish relationship occurs. The Mission District deans—experienced local pastors—and our executive staff are available to assist in times of congregational tension and conflict. Healing and reconciliation are more possible when issues are dealt with earlier, rather than later.

Theological Education Task Force

Because there will be a full report from the Theological Education Task Force, I will not provide such here. Suffice it to say this task force has been functioning under the able leadership of the Rev. Dr. Roy Harrisville III with competent and engaged task force members! Surely, this is one of the greatest concerns expressed within the NALC, and it should reassure us that we have a task force working not just on providing theological education now, but developing a strategy to provide such education effectively and creatively in the future.

Ecumenical and Inter-Lutheran Relations

As I came on staff in January, it became clear we needed to shift responsibility for ecumenism and inter-Lutheran relations from the prior committee. Because all such actions ultimately move to/through the Joint Commission on Theology and Doctrine, then on to the Executive Council and ultimately the NALC convocation and congregations, the committee was disbanded. I serve under the bishop’s guidance, as he is the chief ecumenical officer. I serve to facilitate and coordinate our ecumenical and inter-Lutheran work.

A summary of our work so far:

+ *Lutheran World Federation (LWF)*: At the recommendation of the Executive Council, the 2011 NALC Convocation unanimously approved the proposed Initial Statement on the Ecumenical and Inter-Lutheran Commitments of the North American Lutheran Church. An important part of that statement was the intention to apply for full membership in the Lutheran World Federation. An initial application has been submitted to LWF, although our application will not receive LWF action until we have completed our process of approving a resolution affirming the application and if approved, receiving ratification by our congregations as required by our constitution. If and when that takes place, LWF will move our application through their review and membership process. While there have been many questions raised with regard to LWF full membership, our desire is motivated by our commitment to communication and cooperation between Lutherans internationally, and our intention to “stand with” our conservative, orthodox Lutheran brothers and sisters in the global south, especially EECMY and ELCT who have requested we apply for full membership. At the same time, we realize that the LWF is the ecumenical partner for many international Christian bodies, not the least of which is the Roman Catholic Church. To be involved in international discussions between Lutherans and these global Christian bodies, we wish to have both voice and vote within LWF.

+ *Ethiopian Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus (EECMY)*: The full communion agreement approved by the 2011 NALC Convocation was ratified by congregations of the NALC in June of 2012. According to EECMY President Rev. Dr. Wakseyoum Idossa, the agreement will now be presented to their decision-making body.

+ *Evangelical Lutheran Church in Tanzania (ELCT)*: Bishop Bradosky, Pr. Paul Borg and I will visit the ELCT in August-September of 2012, as part of the 125th anniversary celebration of the first Sunday service in Dar es Salaam, August 27, 1887. At that time we will meet with bishops of ELCT with the hope of developing a working agreement between our churches.

+ *Lutheran Church–Missouri Synod*: Thus far we have had two consultations with representatives of the LCMS, the first in December 2011 in St. Louis and most recently (July 2012) in Columbus. Our consultations also include President Robert Bugbee of Lutheran Church-Canada. At the recent meeting a proposal for an informal working agreement was developed as well as a plan for a two-year ongoing dialogue focusing on the Gospel and the Scriptures. The next meeting will take place in December 2012 at Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne. Bishop Bradosky has also signed the recent open letter written by LCMS President Matthew Harrison addressing freedom of religion.

+ *Augsburg Lutheran Churches*: At this time, Augsburg Lutheran Churches serves as our official endorser of military chaplains. Bishop Bradosky also was preacher and representative of the NALC at the 12th Annual Augsburg gathering in El Paso, Texas, July 2012.

+ *Lutheran Congregations in Mission for Christ (LCMC)*: We continue to attempt to engage LCMC for common mission and ministry, but find their structure makes it difficult to establish a church-to-church relationship. LCMC Augustana District has appointed a member liaison to engage with NALC for common work and mission. We are excited about the possibility of a closer relationship with this LCMC district.

+ *Anglican Church in North America (ACNA)*: ACNA has been described as our elder sibling, as they were formed one year before the NALC over many of the same issues. We have had one official consultation at Trinity School for Ministry, Ambridge, PA (March, 2012) which included Archbishop Robert Duncan (ACNA) and Bishop Bradosky, as well as other participants. A second meeting is planned

for September, 2012, in Columbus. Bishop Bradosky and I represented the NALC at the Second Provincial Assembly of ACNA in June, 2012, in Asheville, NC. We have also formalized a relationship with two seminaries approved by ACNA for orthodox students preparing for ministry in the Church: Trinity School for Ministry, Ambridge, PA and Nashotah House Theological Seminary, Nashotah, WI. Both seminaries have developed “Lutheran tracks” for NALC students who might attend these schools.

+ *Roman Catholic Church*: Newly-elected Bishop Bradosky, Bishop Emeritus Spring and I traveled to Rome in September, 2011, to meet with Bishop Farrell, Secretary of the Pontifical Council for the Promotion of Christian Unity, and briefly with Cardinal Koch, President of the PCPCU. We discussed the changing landscape of Lutheranism in North America and the organization of the North American Lutheran Church. We were encouraged to continue to develop our relationship with the US Catholic Conference of Bishops. In doing so, Bishop Bradosky has signed their *amicus* brief related to the defense of marriage legal challenges currently working their way through our court system and also signed the US Catholic Conference of Bishops letter regarding freedom of religion. He also attended the funeral mass of Papal Nuncio Archbishop Pietro Sambi, September, 2011, at the Basilica of the Immaculate Conception in Washington, D.C.

As our Lord prayed for and intends for his disciples to be one, even as the Father and the Son are one, we will continue to seek conversation, cooperation, consultation and dialog with other Christians, Lutheran and non-Lutheran whenever possible. This is one of the first and fundamental priorities of the NALC.

I give thanks to Bishop Bradosky and the Executive Council for extending to me this call to special service within the NALC. I give thanks to each of you pastors, congregations and members for the partnership we share in the Gospel within the NALC. Above all, I give thanks to the God and Father of us all, to Jesus Christ our Lord and Savior, and to the indwelling Spirit for providing us with an open door to renewal and reformation within Lutheran Christianity. I pray that we will be faithful in this endeavor!

Respectfully submitted,



The Rev. Dr. David M. Wendel

2012 North American Lutheran Church Convocation

Report of the Treasurer

As the NALC completes its second year of operation, I am pleased to report that our still young church body is on solid financial footing. Benevolence from congregations and other donations have continued to exceed operating expenses. Our cash reserves are strong. We've begun to make grants from the two funds dedicated to our core priorities of mission and theological education. We give thanks to God for these gifts, and look forward to the future with anticipation.

The second page of this report summarizes the NALC's audited financial statements for 2011. During the year, most of our staff was added, the first Convocation was held, the candidacy and other committees began operation, and other programming got underway. For the full year 2011, the NALC received operating donations of \$909,468 and other income of \$95,221, while operating expenses totaled \$805,530.

Over the past year, the NALC has continued to grow quite rapidly. Consequently, for 2012, we anticipate that both income and expenditures will significantly exceed the original budgeted amounts. For the first half of 2012, the NALC received operating donations and other income of \$609,054, while operating expenses totaled \$564,351. Importantly, however, that operating surplus was entirely generated in the first quarter; for the second quarter of 2012, donations were slightly less than operating expenses.

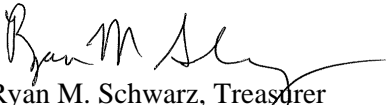
For the full year 2012, we now estimate that operating donations and other income will total roughly \$1,342,500, and that operating expenditures will total approximately \$1,193,932.

Turning to the dedicated funds, we forecast total grants in 2012 from the Great Commission Fund of \$125,000, an amount that exceeds budget but also includes grants from the Evangelical Lutheran Mission Society, now renamed the Great Commission Society. We estimate total expenditures from the Fund for Theological Education of \$35,500, which is significantly below budget as certain planned programs have not yet been initiated.

For 2013, we are proposing an operating budget that contemplates roughly equivalent increases in both total income and total expenditures of approximately \$100,000 over forecast 2012 levels. Total income would rise to \$1,445,000 while total operating expenses would grow to \$1,298,778. The budget includes funding for just one additional staff member, to be hired in our MN financial administration office. The proposed budgets for the two dedicated funds call for 2013 mission expenditures of \$125,000 and theological education expenditures of \$62,000.

This report, the Treasurer's presentation at the Convocation, the 2013 budgets and the 2011 audited financials will shortly be posted on the NALC website for further review.

Respectfully submitted,


Ryan M. Schwarz, Treasurer

NORTH AMERICAN LUTHERAN CHURCH
Summary 2011 Consolidated Audited Financial Statements

Statement of Activities

Income

Unrestricted Donations	
Member Congregation Donations	\$ 830,916
Individual and Other Donations	78,552
Other Income	95,221
Subtotal - Unrestricted Donations	1,004,689
Restricted and Designated Donations	108,830
Total Income	\$ 1,113,519

Expenditures

Committees and Task Forces	\$ 78,995
Convocation and Conferences	67,843
Mission Support and Other Grants Distributed	73,983
Salaries and Benefits	375,842
Employee Travel	92,705
Administrative Expenses and Other	136,502
Total Expenditures	825,870
Change in Net Assets	\$ 287,649

Balance Sheet

Assets

Cash and Cash Equivalents	\$ 1,417,806
Accounts Receivable	750
Prepaid Expenses	6,500
Property and Equipment	18,474
Total Assets	\$ 1,443,530

Liabilities and Net Assets

Liabilities

Accounts Payable	\$ 37,045
Accrued Expenses	20,674
Total Liabilities	57,719

Net Assets

Unrestricted/Undesignated	546,021
Designated and Donor Restricted	839,790
Total Net Assets	1,385,811

Total Liabilities and Net Assets	\$ 1,443,530
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NOTE: Complete Audited Financial Statements will be available on the NALC website.