



## 2013 Convocation

### Staff Reports

Bishop .....	1
General Secretary .....	5
Assistant to the Bishop for Missions .....	11
Assistant to the Bishop for Ministry and Ecumenism .....	15
Treasurer .....	19



## **2013 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,

*“And we also thank God continually because, when you received the word of God, which you heard from us, you accepted it not as the word of men, but as it actually is, the word of God, which is at work in you who believe. For you, brothers, became imitators of God's churches in Judea, which are in Christ Jesus: You suffered from your own countrymen the same things those churches suffered from the Jews, who killed the Lord Jesus and the prophets and also drove us out. They displease God and are hostile to all men in their effort to keep us from speaking to the Gentiles so that they may be saved. In this way they always heap up their sins to the limit. The wrath of God has come upon them at last. But, brothers, when we were torn away from you for a short time (in person, not in thought), out of our intense longing we made every effort to see you. For we wanted to come to you—certainly I, Paul, did, again and again—but Satan stopped us. For what is our hope, our joy, or the crown in which we will glory in the presence of our Lord Jesus when he comes? Is it not you? Indeed, you are our glory and joy. (1 Thessalonians 2:13-20)*

I chose this text to begin my report as a way of expressing my sincere thankfulness for the faithful ministry of our pastors and congregations throughout the NALC. I have been privileged to witness first hand your faithfulness to Christ that is rooted in your approach to the Word of God. Your faith is anchored in the authority of the Word in your preaching and teaching. Rather than rely on the human imagination to form an image of Christ that is more appealing and consistent with the values of contemporary culture, you have relied on the Scripture to reveal the truth of Christ's nature and identity. The most fulfilling part of this office you have entrusted to me is the chance to be with you to share in Word and Sacrament ministry, to be mutually edified in our study of the scriptures, to enjoy the fellowship of our celebrations and to encourage one another in the direction of faithfully following Christ as His disciples. The Christ revealed in Word and Sacrament is transforming and guiding our life together through the power and work of the Holy Spirit.

This text reminds us that the pathway for following Christ is not easy, but one filled with suffering and persecution. Wherever we look in the world we find Christians facing loss and severe consequences for their faith in Jesus. That is true for Christians in Syria, Egypt, Palestine and other countries of the Middle East. It has been true in China, India and Indonesia for many years. Our guests from Ethiopia and Tanzania will also share the growing problems of such persecution, in their nations and throughout other parts of Africa. Those in North America are realizing that while the persecution is more subtle, it is all the more profound and difficult to comprehend. Many among us have endured great hardship from other church bodies. You have faithfully dealt with loss, pain, grief, brokenness, depression, and despair. You have struggled to break free of the immobility brought on by overwhelming anxiety. Many I have visited discuss openly the great price associated with their faithful witness to Christ. Our pastors and congregations have given up financial security, buildings, countless assets, health, relationships and endured brokenness even within their own families to pursue mission and ministry with us in the NALC.

Such struggles, trials and temptations have forced us to grow in our prayer life, propelled us back to reading and studying the Word, drawing us ever closer to Christ and to one another. Greater than the forces at work to weaken and block the mission of the Church is He on whom we depend and in whom we live and move and have our being. No circumstance, no matter how dire, is preventing us from moving forward to fulfill the Great Commission as faithful followers of Jesus Christ. Our pastors and leaders have looked back at the Saints who have gone before us, reminded that we are not alone in facing such difficulties. We are a part of their tradition, those who are willing to give their life, including their last breath, for the sake of proclaiming the Gospel of Christ.

In spite of difficulties, our pastors and congregations are focused on the future, on the mission of the Church, on following Jesus. Their commitment to sacrificial service flows from the hope, promise and assurance that fill them. Because of your faithful witness I am honored to tell others about the work of the NALC and count it a privilege to serve you in this capacity.

I am also truly grateful for the wise counsel and advice of Bishop Emeritus Paull Spring and a number of other former bishops. Their friendship is precious and their guidance essential.

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. As you see these individuals, please express your appreciation for their service. They have only one task: to do all they can to strengthen our pastors and congregations for effective mission and ministry.

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, Administrative Assistant to the Executive Staff

Ann Gleason, Financial Administrator

Rachel Sosebee, Administrative Assistant for Mission

Kathy Jacobson, Administrative Assistant for Finance

Your Executive Council also deserves your thanks and praise. Throughout this year they have met countless times to keep us moving forward with great efficiency. They have committed even more of their time to a strategic planning process and spend time at every meeting developing initiatives that will assist us in meeting the challenges of the future with even greater strength through appropriate preparation. I also count it a privilege to work with this gifted group of leaders.

It would be impossible to fulfill the demands of this office without the faithful service of another indispensable group of leaders that touch the lives of our pastors and lay leaders in our congregations on a more consistent basis than is physically possible me or my staff. Our Deans, like our Executive Council are volunteers. Most of them serve congregations who graciously provide time and opportunity to fulfill this office leading each of our Mission Districts. In addition to thanking them, please pray for each of these leaders.

Still others must be commended for their faithful service on our committees and task forces: Missions, Candidacy, Communication, Joint Commission on Theology and Doctrine, Court of Adjudication, Task Force for Theological Education, Task Force on Discipline, and Task Force on Diaconal Ministry. Their work is helping us to strengthen our witness and make us even more effective in our ministry.

Since last year I have grown even more confident that the best approach to this office for me is the only one I know: 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, weddings, funerals, 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. As we travel we continue to make time to meet with congregations and pastors who are just beginning to struggle with the decision to join the NALC. While with them I share your stories of new life and faithful ministry with those who share a common commitment to mission in the NALC.

While the process of traveling from one place to another is time consuming, frustrating and physically draining, time spent with our congregations is always encouraging and the source of great joy. Like Paul, I have often wished I could spend even more time with you but am prevented by other responsibilities. Finally, I chose this text because these words of Paul express my deep love for you and our life together in the North American Lutheran Church: *“For what is our hope, our joy, or the crown in which we will glory in the presence of our Lord Jesus when he comes? Is it not you? Indeed, you are our glory and joy.”*

Following is a list of some of the most significant ways I have used my time in serving you and discharging my responsibilities.

- Twenty-eight spent weekends with congregations in the US and Canada
- Seven ordinations and multiple installations performed
- Work with the Joint Commission on Theology and Doctrine
- Two trips to Tanzania at the invitation of ELCT as keynote speaker and developing relationships
- Meeting with all Mission District Deans
- Speaker at the Renewal Conference on Discipleship
- Participation in NALC – Canada Section Theological Conference
- Guest speaker for eight Mission District Convocations
- International Conference on Confessional Leadership sponsored by LCMS
- Task Force on Theological Education
- First Mission District Meeting of the NALC – Canada Section
- Speaker for STS General Retreat
- Video for Theological Education Proposal
- Right to Life March in Washington DC
- NPRC Worship Service in Constitution Hall
- Ancient Future Church Conference at Trinity School for Ministry
- Ecumenical efforts:
  - Meeting with leaders of Catholic Conference of Bishops in Washington DC
  - Meetings with leaders of the Anglican Church of North America
  - Meetings with Lutheran Church Missouri Synod leaders
  - Association for Church Renewal
  - Attended LCMC annual gathering in Denver
- Continue application process for membership in Lutheran World Federation
- Continuing work with Lutheran CORE

Strategic planning process with Executive Council  
Partnership agreement with Gordon-Conwell Seminary  
Partnership agreement with Navigators for discipleship strategy  
Discipleship coaching with Navigators  
Pilot project with Navigators for 20 congregations of the NALC in four Mission Districts

On a personal note, Kristi and I have moved to our home in Bradenton, Florida, and I am finishing my first physical in 25 years and working to stay healthy and fit.

Other qualified members of our staff will provide additional information about many of these subjects. As I continue to engage in discipleship coaching, my devotional life of study and prayer grows stronger. For the second year in a row I have prayed for each of our congregations and pastors. Each Monday through Friday I pray for two congregations and two pastors. While I cannot possibly spend time with each of you, I can pray for the power and work of the Holy Spirit to bless far more abundantly than I can imagine.

The text that begins my report has been the subject of my prayers for each of you throughout this year. I prayed for:

- + Faithful preaching and teaching of the Word of God, as the source and authority for all matters of life and faith;
- + Valuing the heritage of those who came before us, passing on the faith we share by always placing ourselves under the authority of Christ and those caring for our spiritual well-being;
- + Bold witness to our community and to the world of our commitment to Christ that is more precious than anything else in life because He is the only source of true life;
- + Perseverance in your commitment to share the Gospel of Jesus Christ in Word and deed regardless of the resistance we face from the world;
- + Willingness to endure the suffering and persecution that comes without compromising the Gospel;
- + Trusting in the Holy Spirit to support and sustain us, trusting in the costly Grace of Christ to save, redeem and renew us;
- + Counting on the judgment of God and refusing to engage in the same behaviors we detest, remembering that apart from Christ life becomes self-destructive;
- + As you serve together in ministry may the Lord cause you to treasure your relationships with one another so these words describe your mutual affection: *“For what is our hope, our joy, or the crown in which we will glory in the presence of our Lord Jesus when he comes? Is it not you? Indeed, you are our glory and joy.”*

I am deeply privileged to witness 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.

It is good to be with you following Christ,



Bishop John F. Bradosky

## **2013 North American Lutheran Church Convocation**

### **Report of the General Secretary**

#### **Outstanding Leadership Teams**

God has blessed the NALC with outstanding leadership teams throughout our church. I continue to marvel at the incredible gifts and experience that our staff and volunteers contribute to the NALC's mission. I am thankful for the opportunity to work with them.

Our administrative staff in Minnesota, Anne Gleason and Kathy Jacobson, have cheerfully carried a very heavy work load for years. Thankfully, they are now joined by Stephanie Larson. She is working part-time now, but will move to full-time when she graduates from college in December. The three of them are responsible for all our financial administration, updating the new web site, all major printings and mailings, maintaining our database, logistical arrangements for our convocations and other events, just to name the most important responsibilities.

Becky Seifert and Rachel Sosebee are the executive staff's invaluable administrative assistants in the Ohio office. In addition to support for our executive staff, Becky manages the Ohio office, arranges for all meetings in the Ohio office and Columbus area, and provides extensive support for the Candidacy Committee.

Rachel has been the administrative assistant to Gemechis Buba and has provided strong support for our mission teams, mission congregations and the Great Commission Society. We are sorry to be losing Rachel later this month, but are glad for the new opportunity that she and her family have in North Carolina with her husband's new job. Rachel's support was invaluable in the Ohio office in the first few months of the NALC. She has been a strong advocate for the NALC's mission-driven core value. We will miss her passion for missions and pray for God's blessings for her and her family in their new venture.

We have begun the search for a new staff person who will work in support of Gemechis Buba and Becky Seifert in the Ohio office. In the meantime, if there are people in the Columbus area who could volunteer some time to be a receptionist and assist Becky, please contact Becky.

Some of my responsibilities include working with the Candidacy Committee and the Canadian Commission, whose reports are included separately in the Convocation reports. The volunteers for both those groups worked very hard this past year. They perform an amazing role in the NALC.

#### **Communications Committee**

The Communications Committee focused most of its time and energy this past year on the development of the new website. We are most grateful to David Hahn and his team for working with us to develop the new site. The committee is very happy with the result and hopes that NALC members find it easy to use and helpful.

The new website is the first phase in this project. The second phase is the development of a template for congregational and Mission District web sites. The template will be easy to use and designed to connect well with the NALC site.

Much more of a challenge than website technology is the shifting of the communications culture within the NALC. The new site can be very dynamic if there is a constant inflow of news and events from the Mission Districts, all of which can be easily linked to Facebook and Twitter. The younger generations are tuned into the online, instant connection, always something new, digital world. However, the communications culture throughout most of the NALC is focused on static websites and monthly print communications. There is a place for these forms of communication, but not without the dynamic, online forms. The Communications Committee will be challenging congregations and Mission Districts to make this shift in culture.

All in the NALC and many beyond the NALC are eagerly awaiting the completion of Bishop Bradosky's book on discipleship. The book will be accompanied by a Bible study and DVD of the Bishop making an oral presentation on discipleship.

We are thankful for the committee members who guide our communications plans. The members are: Rev. David Baer, Donna Evans, David Hahn, Carol Lattier and Ryan Schwarz. Anne Gleason and Kathy Jacobson in the Minnesota office also work extensively with the committee. Last, but not least, we are deeply indebted to our former webmaster, Terry Rowley. He volunteered his time and talents at a crucial time in the very early days of the NALC by building and maintaining the previous website. He also contributed important insights in the early stages of planning for the new site.

### **Certification of Pastors**

There has been no slowdown in the number of inquiries from pastors, Lutheran and non-Lutheran, who are interested in being certified as NALC pastors. They are attracted by the NALC's core values and the fact that the NALC practices what it believes. Without the support of our Mission District Deans, who conduct most of the certification interviews, it would be impossible to keep up with the demand.

Between the steady number of new candidates for ordained ministry and the number of already ordained pastors coming into the NALC, we remain blessed with an abundance of very capable pastors available to serve our congregations.

### **Lutheran Benefits**

Verlyn and Kelly Hahn and the Hahn Financial Group in Sioux Falls, SD, continue to provide an outstanding service for the NALC with their administration of the Lutheran Benefits Plan. They do this in a very challenging, always changing environment. The challenges in the health insurance industry are especially acute. We are thankful for their management of the sudden mid-year change in the health insurance. More than that, the entire team at the Hahn Financial Group goes out of their way to provide prompt personal service to NALC members.



We now have in place an investment review committee that meets regularly with Verlyn Hahn for a review of the retirement plan. The first review was held in June. Thanks to Mike Bennett, Anne Gleason, Mandy Grimmer, Jim Hansen, Ryan Schwarz and Steve Shipman for serving on this committee.

Verlyn Hahn will report to the Convocation, but here is a brief summary of the current status of Lutheran Benefits as of late July 2013:

#### **The Lutheran Benefits Health Plan**

- 282 individuals (181 congregations) currently enrolled in health plan
- 18 individuals (8 congregations) currently enrolled in the non-health package

#### **The Lutheran Benefits 403b Retirement Plan**

- 514 individuals eligible to participate (census-loaded)
  - 302 individuals participating (\$ in account) – 58.7%
  - 189 individuals who have transferred in \$ from other accounts – 62.5%
- 181 congregations enrolled
  - 155 congregations actively participating – 85.6%
- Total plan funds under management - \$45,478,322

#### **Emergency and Disaster Relief**

The past twelve months have been incredibly busy for all involved in disaster response and recovery in the United States. Thankfully, NALC members have been very generous in donating time and resources in support of these efforts. Our partner, Mary Woodward of Disaster Services–Lutheran Social Services of Central Ohio, was instrumental in arranging for quick response and long-term recovery after the many disasters.

Two NALC congregations were in the middle of the disasters and the response and recovery efforts. St. Andrew by the Sea Evangelical Lutheran Church in Atlantic City, NJ, did not have much damage to its church as a result of hurricane Sandy, but many members did have damage to their homes and property, including Pr. David McGettigan. Thanks to Mary’s assistance, Pr. McGettigan is now an expert in forming and leading a long-term recovery team for his city.

Peace Lutheran Church in Edmond, OK, and its members were very involved in the response to the tornadoes that hit Oklahoma City. They were able to connect with a Lutheran Church–Missouri Synod (LCMS) congregation and coordinate their support with the LCMS World Relief and Human Care disaster response ministry.

We have just appointed a disaster response task force composed of Cheryl Ingraham, Pr. David McGettigan, Pr. Bert Schultz, Pr. Ron Warren and Mary Woodward. They will meet in September to put together an overall plan for NALC disaster response and recovery that will include: 1) a plan for NALC congregations to be trained on how best to respond before a disaster strikes their community; 2) a plan for coordinating immediate responses to a disaster; and 3) a plan for coordinating long-term recovery efforts. This plan will involve connecting with both Disaster Services–Lutheran Social Services of Central Ohio and the LCMS disaster response ministry.

All of the above applies only to disasters in the United States. For response to international disasters and emergencies, congregations in the United States can support Lutheran World Relief ([lwr.org](http://lwr.org)) and congregations in Canada can support Canadian Lutheran World Relief ([clwr.org](http://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 deal with the root causes of poverty so their ministries are continuously effective, not just in times of emergencies.

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

### **Legal Support**

We are very blessed to have as our lead attorney, Martin Nussbaum, and his assistant, Joan Rennekamp, at Rothgerber Johnson & Lyons LLP in Colorado Springs, CO. Mr. Nussbaum has provided excellent advice and assistance a number of times this past year. Ms. Rennekamp was the key person responsible for completing the template for the employee handbook for our congregations. If you did not participate in the webinars about the handbook, but would like to work with Ms. Rennekamp to get a handbook for your congregation, contact our Minnesota office at 888-551-7254.

### **Discipline Procedures**

Our discipline procedures task force is getting close to completing the procedures and rules for the discipline of pastors and congregations. Thankfully, we have not had the need to use a formal discipline process, but Paull Spring, Jim Gale and Ron Warren have been hard at work developing procedures should the need arise. As the task force completes its work this fall, we will make more information available about the procedures.

One part of the process includes an Inquiry Panel with five panel coordinators located across North America. Their names will be made available following the Convocation so NALC members can report potential disciplinary violations to a panel coordinator. The Inquiry Panel conducts the initial investigation to recommend whether formal discipline charges should be filed.

### **New Ecumenical Coalition and Association for Church Renewal (ACR)**

I reported last year that there would be a meeting of Anglican, Lutheran, Methodist, and Presbyterian leaders in October 2012. The goal was to consider the possibilities of orthodox Christians in these traditions working together to confess the Christian faith in an increasingly secular and hostile culture, and supporting each other in building up the body of Christ.

About 30 leaders from those traditions met in Dallas, TX. The leaders included some still in the old mainline denominations and some that are now in new denominations. For example, our Lutheran contingent included Lutheran CORE members still in the ELCA and NALC members. For part of our time together we divided into four working groups – ecumenical relations and theological education, confronting the culture, missions and church planting, and social witness.

The whole group agreed on a common cause statement and expressed the hope and desire to find ways to work together. There was also a hope that orthodox Christians from traditions and denominations not represented at the Dallas meeting might be included in future meetings. A steering committee was appointed to plan the next steps in the process of the emerging coalition. The steering committee met in March and we will meet again in October.

Meanwhile, the ACR — the organization for leaders and groups working for renewal and reform in the mainline denominations — has been watching the emerging coalition. There are several of us involved in both the ACR and the new coalition. The ACR decided that it would continue to observe the coalition and hold its October meeting this year right after the coalition meeting.

The meetings will be in Noblesville, IN, sandwiched around the fall meeting of the National Association of Evangelicals (NAE). Dr. Roy Clark, Stated Clerk of the Presbyterian Church in America, is on the NAE Board of Directors and is on our steering committee for the new ecumenical coalition. Those of us involved in the ACR and the new coalition will attend the NAE meeting as observers.

It is too early to know how the ecumenical coalition will develop and what relationship it will have with the ACR. No matter what develops, the initial meetings of the new coalition have brought together a wider group of orthodox Christian leaders. I continue to have great hope for the potential contributions of a coalition that is truly grounded in the confession that Jesus alone is Lord and Savior for all of sinful humanity and truly supportive for mutually building up the body of Christ in North America.

### **Congregational Reports**

The statistical summary of the annual congregational reports for 2012 follows this report. As always, the summary is a work in progress. Thanks to the feedback from the system for the 2011 reports, Anne Gleason and I developed a better system for the 2012 reports. We are still nowhere near 100% participation, but we are gradually developing a more objective view of the NALC's membership. We will again nudge congregations that have not completed their reports to do so.

### **Personal Thanks**

The love, prayers and support that our family has received from NALC members (as well as many other Christians) following the death of our son, Kevin, in April has been phenomenal. We can never thank you enough for the multiple ways that you have shared in our sorrow and grief, and have kept the hope of the resurrection before us. God bless you all.

Respectfully submitted,



Rev. Mark C. Chavez  
General Secretary

**North American Lutheran Church  
Congregational Statistics**

The total number of NALC baptized members is greater than 136,000. The summary below includes data that was submitted by congregations in their 2012 and 2011 congregational reports.

**186 of 364 congregations reporting - 51%**

<b><u>Total Membership</u></b>		Total	Average
2012	Baptized Membership	71,138	382
2011	Baptized Membership	100,848	375
2012	Confirmed Membership	55,486	298
2011	Confirmed Membership	60,573	225

**2012 Membership Additions**

Infant Baptism	858
Adult Baptism	116
Confirmation	652
Transfer In	1,013
Affirmation of Faith	699

**2012 Membership Removals**

Death	759
Transfer Out	788
Other	1,224

**Worship Attendance**

2012	Average Attendance	122
2011	Average Attendance	121

**Geographic Setting**

Farming area	35
Small town or rural	97
Metropolitan area	25
Suburb of large city	29

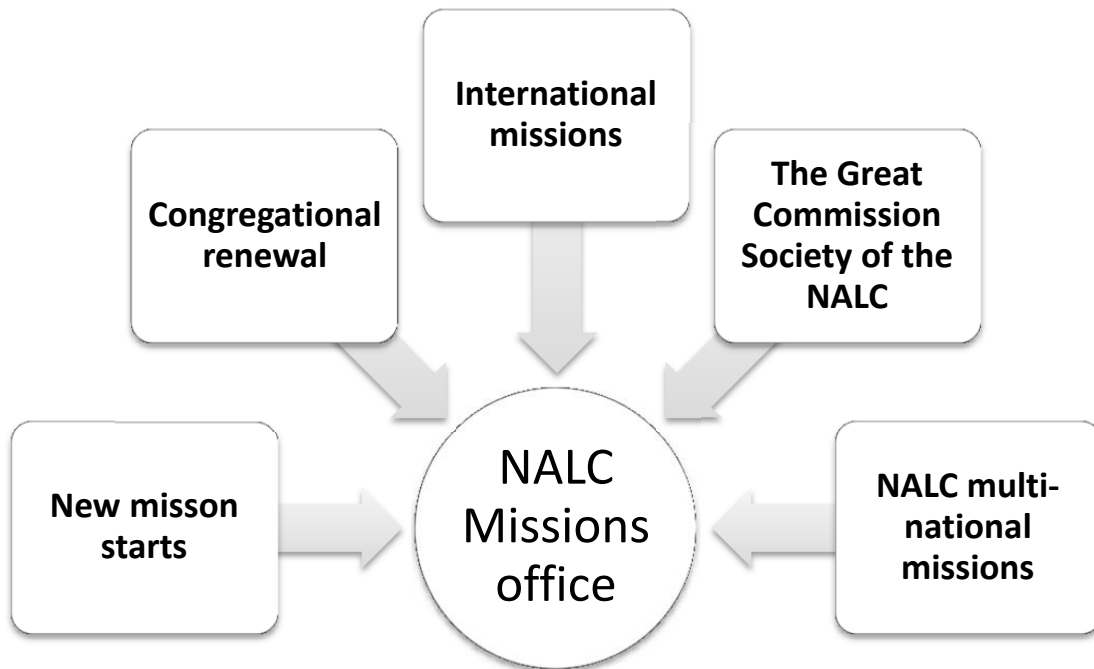
**Affiliate Membership**

LCMC	34
ELCA	8
Augsburg	1

## 2013 North American Lutheran Church Convocation Report of the Assistant to the Bishop for Missions

*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 9:37-38*

These precious and powerful words of Jesus put our missions work in clear perspective. In the 21<sup>st</sup> century the church of Jesus Christ is still looking at a plentiful harvest with very few workers. In order to deal with this core problem and challenge, we have to look to the Lord of the Harvest for guidance and instructions. As a solution to this problem Jesus gave a very clear command in the Great Commission; Go and make disciples! Therefore, making disciples and developing leaders out of our congregations, mission congregations and house churches is the single most important call of a mission-driven church. In this spirit of obedience to the Great Commission given by Jesus, the NALC missions office works with congregations, pastors and missionaries to assist in their local and international mission-driven endeavors. It is our firm belief that mission is done through faithful service of the people of God in and out of their congregations. Our role is encouraging, supporting, resourcing and facilitating these works of service, mission and ministry. The NALC missions office works through the following five focal points:



## **New Mission Starts**

The number of new NALC mission congregations continues to grow. Currently there are more than 50 mission congregations of various forms in the NALC. Our 2012/2013 objectives were:

1. Assisting mission congregations to grow in their outreach, spiritual maturity, leadership development and membership;
2. Assisting mission congregations to be financially strong so they can become self-supporting and stand on their own feet;
3. Encouraging and working with congregations to have their own mission pastors.

In most cases these goals are being realized. However, we have much to do in the areas of church growth, financial self-sufficiency and in calling their own mission pastors.

In 2013/2014 we will be starting numerous mission posts and house churches around North America in partnership with our Mission Districts, congregations, lay and ordained members. House church and mission post development training will be offered at our upcoming Mission Festival on November 7-9, 2013.

## **Congregational Renewal**

The NALC has conducted renewal conferences and training events in various parts of North America. Many pastors and leaders were encouraged, blessed and transformed through those events. The NALC will continue to enhance this work of congregational renewal and transformation in 2013/2014 with a very heavy emphasis on discipleship and congregational leadership development. Our key partner in this work of congregational renewal and transformation will be The Navigators.

The seven basic elements commonly lifted up as a means of congregational renewal are:

1. Regular worship (Word and Sacrament)
2. Small group ministries (Bible study)
3. Prayer (intentional, regular and participatory)
4. Works of ministry (local, national and international)
5. Leadership development (intentional disciple-making)
6. Mission trips (connecting with global mission realities)
7. Giving (time, talent and treasure)

## **International Missions**

The North American Lutheran Church deals with international missions using three entry points:

1. Sending and supporting missionaries;
2. Supporting international mission projects;
3. Enhancing international mission partnerships with partner churches.

Based on these three focal points we are blessed with missionaries in five countries: *Ecuador, Hungary, Mongolia, South Sudan and India*. Ministry description and detailed information about all of our missionaries are found on the NALC website.

The NALC is engaged in international mission projects in the following eight categories:

1. Congregational-based, -driven and supported projects;
2. Mission District-driven projects;
3. Individually-initiated international projects;
4. Joint (shared) projects with our partner organizations;
5. Mission projects sponsored by recognized ministries;
6. Short-term disaster response projects;
7. Strategic international projects with partner churches;
8. Missionary-initiated and -driven projects.

Through the many works of our missionaries and joint projects, the North American Lutheran Church international missions are touching many around the world in such places as Africa, Europe, the Middle East, Asia and Latin America. Thanks be to God!

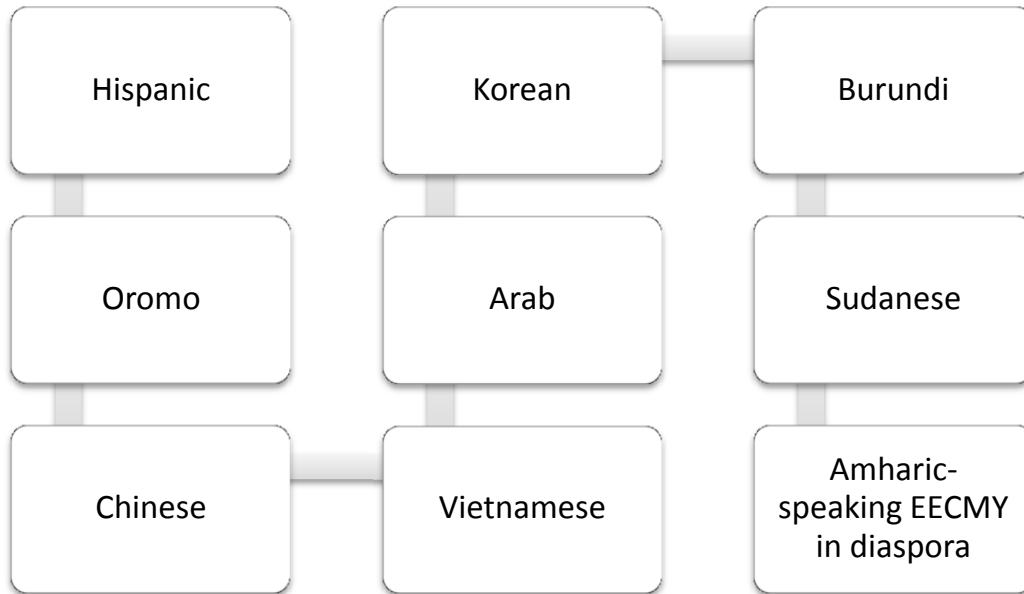
### **The Great Commission Society**

The leadership of the Great Commission Society continues to envision a renewed direction for its work. GCS will have a presence on the NALC website where it will function as a mission connection hub to allow missional opportunities and mission resources to find each other. Members and leaders of the GCS are making a huge difference in advancing Christ's mission through their donations and prayers. A report from the Great Commission Society and an invitation to join will be presented at the Convocation.

### **Multi-National Mission**

The multi-national ministries of the NALC work with the people of God, serving Christ in the United States and Canada in their native languages.

In the last three years the following ministries were organized within the NALC mission office as a ministry team. This ministry team cares for the specific needs and concerns of these language- and culture-specific ministries. So far we have ministries in the following communities:



NALC missions office continues to care for our existing language- and culture-specific ministries while proactively and intentionally reaching out to advance Christ’s mission in these and many more communities. We thank God for the many congregations and Mission Districts who continue to care for these congregations and their leaders in a myriad of ways.

We give thanks to God and extend very sincere appreciation to all members of the NALC mission team who are serving in various mission groups. They are making a difference and touching many nations because of their deep commitment to serving in this mission of Jesus Christ.

Respectfully submitted!

The Rev. Dr. Gemechis D. Buba



## **2013 North American Lutheran Church Convocation Report of the Assistant to the Bishop for Ministry and Ecumenism**

*Brethren, I do not consider that I have made it my own; but one thing I do, forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus. Let those of us who are mature be thus minded; and if in anything you are otherwise minded, God will reveal that also to you. Only let us hold true to what we have attained. (Philippians 3:13-16)*

Shortly after our 2012 NALC Convocation, Bishop John Bradosky, Pastor Paul Borg and I visited the Eastern and Coastal Diocese of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Tanzania as they celebrated the 125<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the first Lutheran service on their territory, led by a German missionary. I have spoken about this experience before. However, the Scriptural theme for their celebration can serve as something of a theme for us in the NALC as well. We want to “forget what lies behind and strain forward to what lies ahead, pressing on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.” As I have visited with pastors, congregations and Mission Districts of the NALC, it is abundantly clear that we are leaving the past behind and striving, leaning, moving forward for the sake of the goal of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus!

Without a doubt, the majority of my time is spent working with pastors who are available for call and congregations who have a pastoral vacancy. Thankfully, the comment I hear most often is, “At least our call process is better than what we had before.” I hope and pray this is the case. In our call process, we can’t perform miracles. There are frustrations and the call process teaches patience. Yet, our only agenda is assisting in making connections between pastors and congregations such that they see the unfolding of God’s will. We understand the process as being the Lord’s process—we are “waiting for the Lord” to reveal his will—and his choice—to us. We seek to be flexible, available and responsive to congregations and pastors in the call process, and trust that this is refreshing and a new experience, as we seek to be different and do things differently in the NALC.

I have also given a fair amount of time to congregations and pastors who are troubled and in conflict. Although I wish it were different, we are the same sinners in the NALC that we were before. Being in the NALC doesn’t make us all saints or heal all congregational difficulties. We do, however, attempt to be available and responsive to those who ask for assistance. We will not intervene in congregations unless invited in by pastor and/or congregation council. When invited in, often together with Mission District deans, we are usually able to work with those involved to foster leaving the past behind and moving forward in a more positive way. Although we dream of a day when there will be no conflict or disagreement within our congregations, we accept the reality of our broken, sinful humanity. The best we can offer, then, is assistance when called in to help.

It is truly a joy to have the opportunity to visit, preach and speak within our Mission Districts, congregations, and missions. It is a blessing to participate in the ministry of our local communities of faith, meeting members, spending time with our faithful pastors. I believe I can speak for my fellow staff members when I say that we only wish we had more Sundays free so we could visit more of our

congregations and pastors! The reality is, for a small staff, we do the best we can—and enjoy every visit we make to the frontline of our ministry: our congregations and Mission Districts. Thank you for your invitations to visit and your friendship and hospitality as we visit!

I continue to serve as the ecumenical representative of the NALC on behalf of our bishop, as he is the chief ecumenical officer of our church. During the year 2013, we participated in tri-lateral consultations with the Lutheran Church–Missouri Synod and the Lutheran Church–Canada, and bi-lateral consultations with the Anglican Church in North America. Normally, these involve two meetings annually and follow a design for prayer, study, sharing and discussion. The goal of these consultations is not full communion, but mission, discipleship and witness, cooperating as fully as possible under the Gospel, realizing our differences. In October, we also participated in an ecumenical marriage summit with these denominations at Church of the Holy Communion, Dallas, Texas. From this summit, a landmark “Affirmation of Marriage” was developed and approved by the leaders of each of our bodies. As a result of this summit, we are exploring the possibility of continuing to meet as a multi-lateral consultation, focusing on one topic of significant concern, with the goal of providing joint documents to provide biblical and pastoral guidance to our churches.

We strive to deepen our relationship with the U.S. Catholic Conference of Bishops, as we were encouraged to do so by the Pontifical Council for the Promotion of Christian Unity during our visit in Rome. This is an uphill journey, as the primary North American Lutheran partners for the Roman Catholic Church have been the ELCA and the ELCIC. We encourage our NALC Mission Districts and congregations to continue to reach out to develop relationships with diocesan Roman Catholic bishops, priests and congregations.

We have continued to participate in the Association of Church Renewal, an organization which preceded the NALC and in which our General Secretary, Pr. Mark Chavez, has been involved as a leader. This is an umbrella organization for many ecumenical reform and renewal groups. This group sponsored a larger ecumenical gathering of reform/renewal groups and new denominations (ACNA/NALC/Conservative Presbyterian, etc.) with the goal of broadening the sharing and cooperation within these bodies. At this time, no future gathering is scheduled, but is possible. The Association for Church Renewal will continue to meet, and will be meeting in October in conjunction with a meeting of the National Association of Evangelicals. Pr. Chavez coordinates and directs our involvement in these groups.

Without a doubt, the most significant ecumenical achievement since the last convocation was the completion of our “Partnership Full Communion Agreement” with the Ethiopian Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus. Formally signed during our Congregational Renewal Conference in November, 2012, this establishes a very special relationship between the NALC and EECMY and opens doors for shared mission and ministry. This is especially important given the bold actions of the EECMY with regard to the ELCA. We look forward to developing this relationship further in coming years.

As a result of this Partnership Full Communion Agreement, we are also developing a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the Ethiopian Mekane Yesus Lutheran Fellowship in North America, providing guidance and direction with regard to growing the relationship between these Mekane Yesus congregations in North America. Our hope is to sign this working agreement in July, 2013, prior to our convocation.

Speaking of our relationship with African Lutheran partners, at the time of this writing we are working with the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Tanzania to develop a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between our two bodies. This document would establish an interim relationship, with the possibility of leading us into a Full Communion relationship, as with EECMY. Lord willing, this MoU will be signed at our 2013 convocation, as we host dignitaries from ELCT.

The NALC Executive Council also approved the development of a non-geographic Mission District for Augsburg Lutheran Churches, providing a three-year interim period in which ALC congregations which are received into the NALC may continue their fellowship and working relationships. Such congregations are also to be fully involved in their geographic NALC Mission Districts. At present, we have only one ALC congregation which has affiliated with the NALC.

A first meeting also took place in Edmonton, Alberta, in July, 2013, between leadership of the NALC and the Canadian Association of Lutheran Congregations (CALC), for the purpose of beginning a conversation that will encourage understanding and cooperation between our congregations living in the same context. A second meeting will take place during the Canadian Rockies Theological Conference, in the spring of 2014.

With regard to the Lutheran World Federation, our application for full membership was ratified by congregations of the NALC in early 2013. Our application was presented to the membership committee of LWF, was reviewed by the committee and LWF Council in June, 2013. At this time, they have asked for clarification of several issues, which is in preparation. The next step will be an on-site visit by an LWF representative for the purpose of developing a personal relationship and a deeper understanding of the life and work of the NALC. At this time, we do not expect action before the next meeting of the LWF Council in June, 2014. This is the normal process of membership application, so we will continue as instructed to do so by NALC Convocation and congregation action.

It has been a great joy to serve as the staff liaison for the Theological Education Task Force, working together with the Rev. Dr. Roy Harrisville III to develop a plan for theological education in the NALC. This plan will come to the Convocation with recommendations for action. If approved, we will begin to develop the North American Lutheran Seminary! Information related to this plan was sent to all NALC congregations and pastors, posted on the NALC website, and included in the July issue of NALC News. Please familiarize yourself with this proposal and the requests for action. If approved, we will begin a significant push to educate all our members and congregations, asking for major financial gifts—together with gifts of all amounts—to support our NALC seminary!

As the work of the Theological Education Task force is completed, I have also been appointed to serve as the staff liaison of the newly formed Diaconate Task Force. This group of knowledgeable scholars, pastors and lay persons will have its first face-to-face meeting in October and will begin the work of studying existing forms of lay ministry, diaconal service, and historic forms of ordered Lutheran ministry, with the goal of making a report and recommendations to the NALC Executive Council and Convocation. The desire is to develop one truly Lutheran form that will encompass the many forms existing in Lutheranism, including Associates in Ministry, Pastoral Ministry Associates, diaconal ministers, etc. There is no timeline for the completion of the work of this task force, but we would expect a report will be made at the 2014 Convocation.

Finally, I would like to share with you that in late 2012, we were contacted by Thrivent Financial for Lutherans asking if we would like to apply for a \$12,500 grant to be used to develop stewardship and generosity within our congregations and members. I wrote a proposal for a program titled, “Stewardship for Mission”, which would provide grants to our mission congregations to be used for activities that stimulate and encourage giving and stewardship within our missions—always in need of growth in giving. A number of congregations applied for grants for use within the parameters presented by Thrivent, and grants have been distributed. The program includes accountability and reporting, and in the future there will be information shared about the use of these funds.

As I often say, my position as “Assistant to the Bishop for *Ministry*...” means doing whatever else the bishop tells me to do! While not wanting to extend my report by listing the myriad other tasks assigned to me by Bishop John, let me simply share that I am honored and blessed to be able to serve in this way—serving as assistant to our bishop, whom I respect and love, and serving the NALC as a faithful, confessional Lutheran body. Thank you for this opportunity and call—and know that you can contact me any time for any reason: [dwendel@thenalc.org](mailto:dwendel@thenalc.org) or 614-777-5709 (NALC office). I wish always to be available to our pastors and congregations, and hopefully, to be of assistance.

Respectfully submitted in Christ,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "The Rev. David M. Wendel".

Pastor David M. Wendel

## **2013 North American Lutheran Church Convocation**

### **Report of the Treasurer**

As the NALC completes its third 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 made many grants from the two funds dedicated to our core priorities of mission and theological education, and have plans for major expansion in 2014. God has certainly blessed us with substantial resources for ministry.

2012 Results: The second page of this report summarizes the NALC's financial statements for 2012. During the year, we added the remainder of our senior staff, held our Convocation and two mission conferences, deepened our ecumenical discussions, and revamped our electronic communications efforts. For the full year 2012, the NALC received operating donations of \$1,667,521 (including one substantial bequest) and other income of \$98,456, while operating expenses totaled \$1,250,088.

2013 Forecast: Over the past year, the NALC has continued its growth in membership. Consequently, for 2013, we anticipate that both income and expenditures will significantly exceed the original budgeted amounts. For the first half of 2013, the NALC received operating donations and other income of \$695,214, while operating expenses totaled \$627,824. Importantly, however, that operating surplus was almost entirely generated in the first quarter; for the second quarter of 2013, donations barely matched operating expenses.

For the full year 2013, we now estimate that operating donations and other income will total roughly \$1,522,200, and that operating expenditures will total approximately \$1,416,822. The resulting surplus will largely be transferred to the Great Commission Fund and the Theological Education Fund.

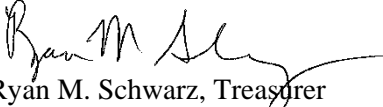
Turning to these dedicated funds, we forecast total grants in 2013 from the Great Commission Fund of \$129,300, slightly in excess of budget. Note that this fund also includes donations to and grants from Great Commission Society of the NALC. We estimate total expenditures from the Theological Education Fund of \$37,631, which is significantly below budget but conserves resources for the potential launch of the North American Lutheran Seminary following this year's Convocation.

2014 Proposed Budgets: For 2014, we are proposing an operating budget which contemplates less than 10% increases in both total income and total operating expenditures over forecast 2013 levels. Total income would rise to \$1,585,000 while total operating expenses would grow to \$1,525,927. The budget includes funding to convert one part time staff position to a full time role in the Ohio ministry office, focused on supporting NALC mission congregations.

The Great Commission Fund budget for 2014 proposes total expenditures of \$155,000. The Theological Education Fund budget calls for a very significant increase in total expenditures to \$312,500, including \$250,000 of funding for the North American Lutheran Seminary.

This report, the Treasurer's presentation at the Convocation, the 2014 budgets, and the 2012 audited financials, when completed, will shortly be posted on the NALC website for further review.

Respectfully submitted,

  
Ryan M. Schwarz, Treasurer

**NORTH AMERICAN LUTHERAN CHURCH**  
**Summary 2012 Consolidated Unaudited Financial Statements**

**Statement of Activities**

**Income**

Unrestricted Donations	
Member Congregation Donations	\$ 1,223,350
Individual and Other Donations	444,171
Other Income	98,456
<b>Subtotal - Unrestricted Donations</b>	<b>1,765,977</b>
Restricted and Designated Donations	334,076
<b>Total Income</b>	<b>\$ 2,100,053</b>

**Expenditures**

Committees and Task Forces	\$ 84,782
Convocation and Conferences	90,650
Mission Support and Other Grants Distributed	182,224
Salaries and Benefits	637,697
Employee Travel	192,025
Administrative Expenses and Other	192,647
<b>Total Expenditures</b>	<b>1,380,026</b>

<b>Change in Net Assets</b>	<b>\$ 720,027</b>
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**Balance Sheet**

**Assets**

Cash and Cash Equivalents	\$ 2,033,957
Accounts Receivable	15,827
Prepaid Expenses	17,987
Property and Equipment	43,750
<b>Total Assets</b>	<b>\$ 2,111,521</b>

**Liabilities and Net Assets**

Liabilities	
Accounts Payable	\$ 5,166
Accrued Expenses	517
Total Liabilities	5,683

Net Assets	
Unrestricted/Undesignated	\$ 640,528
Designated and Donor Restricted	1,465,310
Total Net Assets	2,105,838

<b>Total Liabilities and Net Assets</b>	<b>\$ 2,111,521</b>
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NOTE: Complete Audited Financial Statements will be available on the NALC website.

