



## **2014 Convocation**

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# 2014 North American Lutheran Church Convocation

## Report of the NALS President

### The North American Lutheran Seminary

*...Sending Laborers into the Harvest*

### *Mission/Vision of the NALS*

*In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, we are forming pastors and church leaders for the North American Lutheran Church who will faithfully preach, teach, and live God's eternal truth, through Word and Sacrament, proclaiming Christ's cross and resurrection, making disciples who will renew and grow the church in Christ's name.*

Greetings to you in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ!

It is a delight to report that your Seminary—the North American Lutheran Seminary—is up and running!

We have created a core curriculum and begun to provide an education for pastors and church leaders that is evangelical, orthodox and confessional, an education in which students are formed as faithful servants for ministry in Christ's name.

We work in partnership with existing Christian seminaries, sharing resources so that our students receive a fully accredited seminary education. For seminarians who are discerning a call to ordained ministry within the NALC, we work hand in hand with the NALC Candidacy Committee, so that each pastoral candidate will be prepared to enter the Ministry of Word and Sacrament with obedience and joy, as a faithful disciple, ready to disciple others.

The standard number of credit hours for M.Div. at an ATS (Association of Theological Schools) accredited institution is now 90. Of those 90 hours, 30 will be in Lutheran Studies. Our students will take their biblical language, biblical studies, pastoral care, evangelism, and church history courses from accredited ecumenical faculty at our host institutions and their core Lutheran courses from full-time or adjunct NALS faculty. Students who have completed an M.Div. at a non-Lutheran institution and who desire a Diploma in Lutheran Studies may also complete these same ten courses, which are all geared to preparing seminarians to meet the NALC Standards for Ministry. ATS standards require a minimum of one year in residence at an accredited institution, but two years of the program may be completed online (or in residence).

## NALS Core M.Div. Lutheran Curriculum

### Systematics (12 credits)

- Creeds and Catechisms: An Introduction to Theological Thinking
- Lutheran Confessions
- Intro to Theology I (Lutheran Track)
- Intro to Theology II (Lutheran Track)

### Ethics (3 credits)

- Christian Ethics in the Lutheran Tradition

### Church History (6 credits)

- Modern Church (Lutheran Track)
- The Theology of Writings of Martin Luther

### Liturgy and Homiletics (6 credits)

- Introduction to Lutheran Liturgy
- Proclaiming the Word of God: A First Course in Preaching (Lutheran Track)

### Mission (3 credits)

- Discipleship

The NALS is also offering a non-credit **Certificate in Lutheran Studies** for lay leaders seeking enrichment. This program offers three courses a year that are taught online and are an opportunity to deepen your faith and knowledge in Biblical Studies, Systematic Theology, Church History, The Lutheran Tradition, Discipleship and the Ministries of Caring.

This coming fall we will offer an accredited Master of Arts in Religion with a concentration in Lutheran Studies. (The M.A.R. is a 60-hour degree that can be completed fully online or through a combination of online and residential classes.)

Our current full-time faculty includes The Rev. Dr. Mary Havens, Director of our House of Studies at Gordon Conwell Campus; Dr. David Yeago, Systematics and Ethics; and myself in Liturgical Studies and Homiletics. Part-time faculty includes The Rev. Dr. Monte Luker, Biblical Studies; The Rev. Dr. Nathan Yoder, Systematics and Ethics; and The Rev. Dr. James Nestingen, Church History. I am extremely thankful for such faithful teachers who work to fulfill the Mission/Vision of the NALS.

Conversations continue with regard to further Houses of Study and extension sites for the NALS. We are in conversation with Mission District Deans, pastors, seminarians and a host of theological institutions. We want to take time for appropriate discernment as we provide regional centers for study.

Our Seminary Center is located at Trinity School for Ministry in Ambridge, Pennsylvania, and our first House of Studies is on the Charlotte, North Carolina campus of Gordon Conwell Theological Seminary. Students may attend either location to complete their studies. You can find the details for all of our programs on our website: [www.thenals.org](http://www.thenals.org).

If you are discerning a call to ministry, I invite you to consider the North American Lutheran Seminary as the Christian community where you will be formed for faithful pastoral service, where each of you will be prepared to *Go and make disciples of all nations... (Mt. 28:19-20)*

If you care about the next generations of pastors and church leaders, I ask for your prayerful support. *Pray therefore the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest. (Matthew 9:35-38)*

If you are thankful for the pastoral care and church leadership that you have received from evangelical, orthodox, confessional Lutheran pastors in the course of your life, I invite you to offer your financial support as an act of thanksgiving and praise for the blessings that God has showered upon you. *For the rendering of this service not only supplies the wants of the saints but also overflows in many thanksgivings to God. (2 Corinthians 9-12)*

May God, Father, +Son, and Holy Spirit bless all of you who seek to do his will.

The Rev. Dr. Amy C. Schifrin, STS

## **2014 North American Lutheran Church Convocation**

### **Report of the Interim Board of Regents**

### **North American Lutheran Seminary**

At the 2013 Convocation, the North American Lutheran Church adopted the report from the Task Force for Theological Education. This task force, chaired by Dr. Roy Harrisville III, proposed a design for the North American Lutheran Seminary (NALS): A seminary center at Trinity School for Ministry, Ambridge, Pennsylvania, and the development of two houses of studies, one at Trinity and the other at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary, Charlotte, North Carolina. The report also envisaged the development of other houses of studies in the future. The Convocation further authorized a special campaign to raise at least \$1 million for the new seminary.

Immediately following the Convocation, the Executive Council named Bishop Emeritus Paull Spring to serve as a consultant to assist in the initial work of forming the seminary. The Executive Council also appointed an interim Board of Regents to direct the effort. Serving on the Board of Regents have been Dr. Robert Benne, Dr. Roy Harrisville III, Dr. Benjamin Johnson, Dr. Nathan Yoder, Pastor James Bangsund, Ms. Donna Evans, Pastor Hans Scherner, and Bishop John Bradosky. Elections will be held at this year's Convocation for a permanent Board of Regents.

Even before the formation of the North American Lutheran Seminary, a house of studies was already in place at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary in Charlotte. Under the courageous and generous leadership of the Carolinas Mission District, nine seminarians from Lutheran Theological Southern Seminary began studying for the Lutheran ministry at Gordon-Conwell. Dr. Mary Havens was named director for this house of studies. The faculty includes Dr. Havens, Dr. David Yeago and Dr. Monte Luker. The house of studies at Gordon-Conwell was officially inaugurated at a service in October 2013.

The North American Lutheran Church owes an enormous debt of gratitude to the students and faculty of Gordon-Conwell and to the Carolinas Mission District for what they have accomplished in forming this house of studies. We also owe a special word of appreciation to the Gordon-Conwell administration for its support and encouragement of this effort. Thanks to their creative and imaginative work, the North American Lutheran Seminary has an effective and functioning house of studies at Gordon-Conwell.

The North American Lutheran Seminary is currently developing a second house of studies at Trinity School for Ministry, Ambridge. As with Gordon-Conwell, Trinity leaders and faculty have been extremely supportive of our work and are intentionally seeking ways to integrate the Lutheran house of studies within the Trinity structure. Beginning this fall, Lutheran faculty at Trinity will include the Rev. Dr. Amy Schifrin and Dr. David Yeago.

In October 2013 the Board of Regents nominated the Rev. Dr. Amy Schifrin to serve as the first president of the NALS, and the Executive Council subsequently called her to this position. Dr. Schifrin brings a wealth of experience in ministry to her new position—as a parish pastor, a recognized teacher and theologian, and the author of numerous theological writings. She will be installed this coming October. Dr. David Yeago will also be installed at this service.

Throughout the year the Board of Regents has considered the expansion of houses of studies to other areas in North America. Locations under consideration include sites in Texas, the West Coast, the Upper Midwest, and Canada. Nothing has been decided yet, but this coming year should see at least one more house of studies for the North American Lutheran Seminary.

The Board of Regents followed up on the mandate of the 2013 Convocation and held a series of conversations with the Institute of Lutheran Theology and St. Pauls Lutheran Seminary. These conversations will continue during the coming year, as the Board seeks ways to relate the seminary with these other theological schools.

The Board gave considerable time and attention to developing policy statements on a number of matters. Ms. Fara Pienkosky was hired as a part-time administrative assistant for the seminary. A proposed budget was prepared and will be considered at this year's Convocation.

A special need for the seminary now is to work toward a fundraising or development plan. The people of the North American Lutheran Church have been generous in supporting the seminary financially. Generous gifts have been received from individuals, congregations, and mission districts. However, much more needs to be done if the seminary is to expand to other locations and as the number of seminarians increases. A task force is presently at work on a development plan for consideration by the Board this coming year.

This has been an exciting year for the Board of the North American Lutheran Seminary. The Board is keenly sensitive to the need to prepare men and women to serve as orthodox and confessional pastors for our church—individuals committed to the Bible and the Lutheran Confessions who are also prepared and committed to the growth and outreach of the church. May God bless the ministry of the North American Lutheran Seminary.

Respectfully submitted,

Rev. Paull E. Spring  
Chair, Interim Board of Regents

## **2014 North American Lutheran Church Convocation Report of the Candidacy Committee**

The Candidacy Committee is a twelve-member panel representing the NALC from the East Coast to the West and points in between. Together we work to identify and support future leaders of the church. Working in partnership with the Bishop and his staff, we seek to prayerfully guide qualified candidates as they move through the educational process and discern God's call to ministry. The committee oversees internship site development and placement. We also review applications to the NALC theological education scholarship fund, giving our recommendations to the Executive Council. In addition to our work with seminarians, the committee also leads the colloquy process for ordained pastors seeking to come into the NALC from non-Lutheran traditions.

The committee meets each year in March, June, and October to conduct interview panels for individuals at various stages in the candidacy process. Whether coming to us for an entrance, endorsement, or approval decision, (or perhaps a developmental interview for additional guidance), the committee seeks to aid the candidate's discernment process and theological development while at the same time bearing in mind the requirements and expectations of the wider church. Through the three milestones of the candidacy process candidates are reviewed to determine their progress using seminary transcripts, candidacy essays, CPE and/or internship evaluations, and individual conversations with members of the committee focused on biblical, theological, and confessional matters. Personal and pastoral references as well as full criminal background checks are required of all NALC ministry candidates. In calendar year 2013 the committee gave sixteen (16) positive entrance decisions, two (2) endorsements to proceed with internship, and seven (7) approval decisions recommending those candidates to the church for first call.

2014 marks the fourth consecutive year the Candidacy Committee has sponsored a two-day gathering for NALC seminarians at the annual Convocation. This is an intentional time for prayer, Bible study, relationship-building, and discussion of ministry matters. In past years Bishop Spring, Bishop Bradosky, and Rev. Cathi Braasch have been seminar leaders. Rev. Braasch and Rev. Jody Becker have graciously volunteered their time and talents to lead this valuable opportunity for our ministry candidates in 2014.

The committee would like to thank the Rev. Dr. Amy Schiffrin and the NALS Board of Regents as we work together towards a comprehensive program of theological education and spiritual development for our student-candidates. We also express our thanks and appreciation to Bishop John Bradosky, Rev. Mark Chavez, Rev. David Wendel, Becky Seifert, and Jenny Brockman for their ongoing partnership with and assistance to the committee. Finally, I offer my personal gratitude to each committee member for their time, talent, and dedication to the task to which we have been called. May God bless our work and the North American Lutheran Church!

Respectfully submitted on behalf of the committee,

Rev. Rafe L. Allison, Chairperson



## **2014 North American Lutheran Church Convocation Report of the Court of Adjudication**

The Court of Adjudication respectfully presents this report.

### **I. Cases Handled**

No cases within the Court’s jurisdiction were filed, considered, or decided in the last year. (The Court refrained from considering the lone matter directed to it, which involved interpretation of a congregation’s governing documents and therefore was outside the Court’s jurisdiction.)

### **II. Rules Regarding Disciplinary Cases**

Under Section 15.04 of the Constitution, the Court is obligated to “draft rules of procedure sufficient to ensure fairness to all interested parties and to enable the Court to reach informed decisions.” With one partial exception, the Court fulfilled this responsibility in 2011. The Court could not complete rules regarding appeals in disciplinary matters until this year, when the Executive Council adopted under Section 14.05 of the Constitution “a process for discipline and appeal proceedings.” The Court responded by drafting rules consistent with the NALC Constitution and with the process adopted by the Executive Council. The Executive Council has approved those rules, which now are in force.

\* \* \* \* \*

We all are privileged to serve and we stand ready to fulfill the responsibilities assigned by the Constitution to the Court of Adjudication. We are, however, gratified that no conflicts have yet required our attention.

Respectfully submitted,

Richard F. Currey, Esq.  
Jon Evans, Esq.  
James H. Gale, Esq.  
The Rev. Dr. Jeffray Greene  
The Rev. Dr. Ralph A. Kempinski  
Carolyn Nestingen, Esq.  
The Rev. Dr. Ron Warren

## **2014 North American Lutheran Church Convocation**

### **Report of the Joint Commission on Theology and Doctrine**

The Joint Commission on Theology and Doctrine has three areas of responsibility: theological reflection, ecumenical relationships, and participation in the discipline process. Serving as members of the Joint Commission this past year have been Dr. Robert Benne, Bishop John Bradosky, Dr. Carl Braaten, Dr. Mary Havens, Dr. David Hahn, Dr. Stephen Hultgren, Dr. Benjamin Johnson, Dr. Glen Johnson, Dr. James Nestingen, Pastor Eric Riesen, Bishop Kenneth Sauer, Dr. Amy Schiffrin, Pastor Henry Schulte, Bishop emeritus Paull Spring, Pastor Paul Urling, and Dr. Larry Yoder. Bishop Spring serves as the convener. Three members of the committee have since resigned: Dr. Carl Braaten, Dr. Mary Havens, and Pastor Henry Schulte. We give thanks to God for the contributions of these three persons to the ongoing ministry of the Joint Commission.

As part of its work, the Joint Commission received regular reports on the development of the North American Lutheran Seminary. In addition, reports were received from the Task Force on the Office of Deacon. This task force has been charged with preparing a proposal for a structured office for domestic missionaries, catechists, and evangelists.

During the past year the Joint Commission adopted a theological reflection statement on “Care for the Poor.” The principle author was Dr. Robert Benne. As of this writing, this statement is being received by the NALC Executive Council and the Lutheran CORE steering committee.

The Joint Commission is responsible for planning a colloquy for younger theologians and the annual theological conference. Both of these events take place in connection with the convocations. Dr. Nathan Yoder and Dr. Amy Schiffrin coordinated this year’s colloquy for younger theologians; Dr. Carl Braaten, Dr. Robert Benne, and Dr. Amy Schiffrin coordinated the theological conference. The theme for the 2015 conference, now being called the Braaten-Benne Lecture Series, will be “Martyrdom and the Sufferings of the Righteous.”

The Joint Commission continues to discuss several issues of current interest: The third use of the Law, the relationship between faith and culture, religious liberty, lay presidency at worship, and the role of the Bible in the life of the Church.

The Joint Commission functions as the ecumenical relations committee for the NALC and for Lutheran CORE. Regular reports and updates were received regarding the dialogues with the Lutheran Church–Missouri Synod, the Lutheran Church–Canada, the Anglican Church in North America, and the Common Ground community. A relationship has been developed between the International Christian Network and the NALC, with Lutheran CORE participation pending. The International Christian Network is a global association of reform movements. Bishop Spring and Pastor Paul Borg participated in a conversation with ICN leaders last October. Dr. Nathan Yoder and Pastor Heidi Punt will attend the ICN assembly this coming August. Two representatives from the ICN will attend this year’s convocations and theological conference.

As has been announced, administrative leaders of the Lutheran World Federation have determined not to proceed with the NALC's application for membership. This matter currently is under review by the LWF Council and by the NALC Executive Council.

The NALC constitution provides a role for the Joint Commission in the discipline process for pastors on matters of doctrine. The Executive Council has adopted such a process, and the Joint Commission will give attention to this matter in the coming year.

Respectfully submitted,

Rev. Paull E. Spring, Convener  
Rev. John F. Bradosky, NALC bishop  
Rev. Paul T. Ullring, Lutheran CORE moderator

## **2014 North American Lutheran Church Convocation Report of the NALC Canada Section**

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

The NALC Canada Section has had a great year so far. Our paperwork has been approved by the Canadian government; we are incorporated, and now are awaiting approval of our charitable status.

Our first Canada Section/Mission District convocation was held February 28 - March 1, 2014, with Rev. Dr. Gemechis Buba attending and inspiring us. The constitution for the Canada Mission District was ratified at our convocation. We look forward to further growth in mission. In addition, our first Mission District Youth Conference will be held in Nordegg, Alberta, August 24-27, 2014. We are expecting a great turnout!

As President of the Canada Section, I have been quite active: meeting with pastors, congregations and working on the Strategic Planning Committee of the NALC Mission District Deans. I recently met with NALC General Secretary Rev. Mark Chavez and Assistant to the Bishop Rev. Dr. David Wendel in Winnipeg, along with representatives of the LCMS and LCC, as the Canada Section begins its relationship in a more official capacity with Canadian Lutheran World Relief (CLWR).

We look forward to upcoming informational/worship evenings in Regina and Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, in October and November, respectively, with the purpose of starting a mission in each of these cities. A new mission is slated to start in Grande Prairie, Alberta, in September.

All told, we are excited and grateful for God's leading and work among us as his people. We pray that we may be found faithful to his Word and his call to live and walk as his disciples in a world desperate for hope, compassion and salvation in Christ alone. May the Lord bless us as we seek his will in these days.

Your servants in Christ Jesus,

Rev. Phillip Gagnon, STS, President  
Rev. Karl Johnsen, Vice President  
Rev. K. Glen Johnson, Chair  
Rev. Rolf Bjornstad, Secretary  
Rev. Dawn Nelson, Treasurer  
Rev. Mark Chavez, Director  
Rev. Timothy Lundeen, Director

## **2014 North American Lutheran Church Convocation**

### **Report of the Nominations Committee**

The 2014 Nominations Committee presents the candidates named below for positions to be elected at the July Convocation. We believe that all the individuals named are qualified and would do well in their service if elected.

Each year the Convocation elects one pastor and one layperson to the Executive Council for four-year terms. This year, because of a resignation *ad interim*, the Convocation will also elect a pastor for a three-year term. Clergy candidates were offered the option of running for the three- or four-year term. If no preference was expressed, the nominee was assigned to a ballot with the intention of keeping the ballots equal in length.

One pastor and one layperson are elected each year to the Court of Adjudication.

This year, The Convocation also will elect for the first time a Board of Regents for the seminary. Members of the Board may be either lay or clergy. In future years a portion of the Board will be elected, but this year we are electing the entire Board, with staggered terms of two years, four years, or six years. Again, candidates were given the option of selecting the term for which they were running. Those who did not express a preference were assigned to a ballot with the intention of keeping the ballots equal in length.

This year's candidates are as follows:

**Executive Council, clergy, three-year term:** Pastors Mark Braaten, Donald Brandt, Joseph Freeman, Philip Gagnon, Eddy Perez (incumbent), Marty Ramey, Daniel Selbo and David Steffenson

**Executive Council, clergy, four-year term:** Pastors Donald Allman, Lyle Belleque, Steven Dornbusch, Marshall Hahn, Melinda Jones, Evan McClanahan, Russell Saltzman, and Alden Towberman

**Executive Council, lay, four-year term:** Richard Jansak, Stephen Lord, and Franklin Merrell

**Court of Adjudication, clergy, four-year term:** Karl Glen Johnson

**Court of Adjudication, lay, four-year term:** James Gale (incumbent)

For the Board of Regents, incumbency refers to service on the Provisional Board of Regents.

**Board of Regents, two-year term:** Ms. Donna Evans (incumbent), Pastor Jeffray Greene, Pastor John Harmon, Pastor Thomas Jacobson, Pastor Benjamin Johnson (incumbent), Pastor Karl Glen Johnson, Mr. Frank Merrell, Pastor Hans Scherner (incumbent), and Bishop Paull Spring (incumbent)

**Board of Regents, four-year term:** Pastor Wendy Berthelsen, Pastor Philip Gagnon, Pastor Victor Kolch, Pastor Donna Smith, Pastor Eric Waters, Pastor Nathan Yoder, and Pastor Solveig Zamzow

**Board of Regents, six-year term:** Mr. Trevor Armstrong, Ms. Mari Dew, Pastor Roger Keller, Pastor Kristopher Madsen, Pastor Dieter Punt, Pastor Mark Ryman, and Mr. Roy Schwarz

The Nominations Committee requested nominations from NALC congregations and NALC members by sending a request to congregations and by including requests for nominations in the *NALC News*. Those who were nominated were asked to provide biographical information using a form developed by the committee.

Biographical information on the candidates was provided in accordance with the NALC Constitution which requires the Nominations Committee to provide biographical information on the candidates 90 days prior to the Convocation. The information was posted on the NALC website, published in the *NALC News* for April, and sent by e-mail to NALC congregations.

The Nominations Committee also received nominations for the 2015 Nominations Committee and forwarded those names to the Executive Council for consideration. The Executive Council submits proposed members of the Nominations Committee for confirmation by the Convocation.

We were grateful to receive the names of so many well-qualified individuals for service to our church. God has blessed the NALC with many dedicated servants. Please pray that God will raise up the leaders who will best serve us at this time in the life of our church.

Respectfully submitted,

Pastor Michael H. Tamorria, Chairman  
Mr. Harvey Hengst  
Pastor Theresa Jacobson  
Pastor Russell Saltzman  
Pastor Bert Schultz

## **2014 North American Lutheran Church Convocation**

### **Report of the Women of the NALC**

#### *Connecting with our Sisters in Christ to Share God's Love*

During 2013–2014, The Women's Council was able to accomplish much. For the first time since its inception, all eight council members were able to gather together to plan the Annual Gathering, as well as to set goals. The council met in Colorado Springs, Colorado, where the following goals were set: To utilize existing committees to disperse the workload among the council members, to create and distribute a newsletter, and to continue to build upon the work begun by the previous councils.

This year we produced guidelines (job descriptions, active committees, and reimbursement guidelines) that will assist and inform future councils. Each member tried diligently to communicate with the local women's groups, as well as to create opportunities for all congregations of the NALC to be informed of the work of the WNALC. These documents and additional information about the Women of the NALC can be found on our website: [www.wnalc.org](http://www.wnalc.org).

One goal realized by the council members was the creation of a newsletter for distribution to local women's groups and NALC congregations, as well as to Lutheran CORE and LCMC congregations. The inaugural newsletter was released in December 2013, with subsequent issues in March and April 2014.

We worked further on our organizational goal of connecting sisters in Christ. We collected stories of what women's groups are doing within their own churches and communities and shared these stories with other women and women's groups in the NALC, Lutheran CORE, and LCMC by means of our newsletter.

At the beginning of our terms, each member of the council was assigned a Mission District in order to better enable us to serve the needs of the individual churches within those Mission Districts. Each council member was asked to contact her respective Mission District Dean and request that they forward the initial WNALC information to the appropriate congregational women's group or contact person. When council members receive the WNALC newsletter or any other pertinent information, it is their responsibility to forward that information to those churches.

Starting in 2014, the NALC Disaster Response team began offering disaster response training to each Mission District (first three states where training took place are Texas, South Carolina and Ohio). The women's groups within the Mission Districts have been asked to assist in the process of collecting and documenting items at the disaster response sites established in each Mission District.

In the coming year, the Women's Council hopes to build upon what we have accomplished this past year. We look forward to connecting more women and to continue supporting congregational women's groups. Please continue to keep us in prayer in the year to come!

Respectfully submitted,

Karen Hansen, Co-Chair ([karjojo3@outlook.com](mailto:karjojo3@outlook.com))  
Jessie Phillips, Co-Chair ([jmp218@att.net](mailto:jmp218@att.net))  
The Women's Council for the Women of the NALC

