



2015 Convocation

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2015 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!

Dietrich Bonhoeffer begins his book on Christian fellowship (*Life Together*) with a discussion about community (*koinonia*) in which he reminds Christians who have the joy of fellowship with each other that such companionship is a gift, and that not all Christians have the opportunity to enjoy this blessing.

He speaks about those who are in prison, those who are ill or infirm, those who are lonely with no family or loved ones nearby, and finally about those who proclaim the gospel in lands where to do so is to endanger their lives. He reminds us of the Biblical witnesses, especially those in exile who once knew the fellowship that came from praising God in the assembly, but are now scattered afar. Bonhoeffer writes that the "physical presence of other Christians is a source of incomparable joy and strength to the believer." (*Life Together*, 19)

So it is now on the campus of our Seminary Center in Ambridge at Trinity School for Ministry and at our House of Studies in Charlotte at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary, as we prepare seminarians for service in Christ's Church. This time of intense communal preparation for Word and Sacrament ministry is a great gift for which the students, staff, and faculty of the NALS give thanks: Thanks to God who is the giver of all good gifts; thanks to Mission Districts and congregations who support us not only through prayer and stewardship but through their encouragement of congregational members to enter into the discernment process; thanks to our Bishop and his staff for their ever-present support; and thanks to our Board of Regents whose faithfulness and diligence as Godly leaders model a community of health and grace.

Our students come from throughout the US and Canada. They come not only to study but also to be formed for pastoral ministry and church leadership. We now have a full complement of Certificate, Diploma, and accredited degree programs (M. Div. and M.A.) under the auspices of our host institutions. As our students graduate and go out in Christ's name they will be fully prepared to speak God's eternal love and mercy to those in need and faithfully administer the Holy Sacraments which bind us both to God and to each other. They will continue to do the healing and reconciling work of Christ Jesus our Lord as they care for those whose hearts are broken, whose days are filled with despair, and who apart from Christ have lives without the joy that comes from life within the communion of saints. They will be ready to teach both young and old of the goodness of our God in both established and newly forming congregations. With our first graduates this year, we are already *sending laborers in his harvest*.

In the next decade, and in the decades to come, your seminary, the NALS, is committed to forming pastors who will live out the Great Commission, witnessing with their very lives that he who is Lord of

all cares for all whom he has made. With your support and the strength of the fellowship of the NALC, we are poised for growth. In receiving an orthodox, confessional, Lutheran education, our seminarians are being shaped for a life of discipling others, so that the joy that comes from life in Christ will be the sign of the North American Lutheran Church in this world.

Seeking to live out the reign of God together, we at the NALS are daily proclaiming Christ's lordship and his desire for all people to know his eternal love for them.

Thank you for your vision in helping to create this new seminary.

In Christ's name,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Dr. Amy C. Schifrin". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

The Rev. Dr. Amy C. Schifrin, President

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Report of the Board of Regents of the North American Lutheran Seminary

For the Board of Regents of the NALS the past year has been both challenging and educational. We have learned a great deal as we have considered issues that involve the initiation of a new educational institution. Our main activities fell into the following categories.

PERMANENT BOARD OF REGENTS: At the 2014 NALC Convocation, a permanent Board of Regents was elected. These included the Reverends Wendy Berthelsen, Phillip Gagnon, Jeffray Greene, Dieter Punt, Mark Ryman, Paull Spring and Donna Smith. In addition, Donna Evans, Frank Merrell and Dr. M. Roy Schwarz were chosen to serve. At the first meeting of the Board the following were elected to lead the effort: M. Roy Schwarz, Chair; Donna Evans, Vice-Chair; and Donna Smith, Secretary. In addition, five subcommittees and chairs were appointed, including Academic Affairs, Mark Ryman, Chair; Extension and Expansion, Dieter Punt, Chair; Development, Donna Evans, Chair; Finance, Jeffray Greene, Chair; and Planning and Policy, Paull Spring, Chair. The Board met three times, twice as regularly scheduled meetings and once as a special meeting.

- + BOARD OF REGENTS ACTIVITIES: Among the actions taken by the Board were the following;
 - Operating policies and procedures were developed and adopted.
 - Roles and responsibilities of the Board versus the NALC were clarified, as was the separation of academic and clergy responsibilities.
 - The Faculty Handbook was approved and implemented, including expectations, reviews and discipline.
 - A Development Plan was finalized and adopted by the Board and the Executive Council of the NALC.
 - A strategic planning process was established.
 - Financial management of the NALS, including procedures and responsibilities, was refined.

- + HOUSE OF STUDIES (HOS):
 - Guidelines for the establishment of future Houses of Study were advanced.
 - Roles and expectations were further clarified for the Board, the HOS, the NALS President, the HOS Director, and the support groups.
 - Administrative structure of the HOS and its relationship to the NALS, including the financial management of the HOS, was clarified.
 - Performance reviews for the faculty and the Director were approved.
 - Status of the Memorandum of Understanding with Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary was clarified.

- + PRESIDENT OF NALS:
 - The President’s role, responsibilities and authority were further developed and communicated to our constituents.
 - The Board periodically received reports from the President and has developed an effective working relationship with her.

+ OTHER:

The Board has spent considerable time investigating a complaint about a sensitive personnel matter. This has led to clarification of roles, responsibilities and procedures.

The past year has been an exciting and challenging year for the Board. We are mindfully aware of the responsibilities the NALC has placed on our shoulders. We are acutely aware that we have the once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to develop a unique educational institution that will produce excellent clergy and church leaders to meet the present and future needs of the NALC. To all those who have aided us in this undertaking, we wish a heartfelt “Thank You.” Without your assistance and monetary support, the NALS would not exist. We give thanks to God for His many blessings to date and pray that the Holy Spirit will guide us on the future journey.

Respectfully submitted,

M. Roy Schwarz, MD, Chair

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Report of the Candidacy Committee

The Candidacy Committee is a twelve-member panel representing the NALC from coast to coast. Together we work to identify and support future leaders of the church. Working in partnership with the Bishop, his staff, Mission District deans, seminary representatives, and internship supervisors, 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 NALC Executive Staff. 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 2014 the committee gave ten (10) positive entrance decisions, seven (7) endorsements to proceed with internship, and seven (7) approval decisions recommending those candidates to the church for first call.

2015 marks the fifth 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 Emeritus Spring, Bishop Bradosky, and Pastors Cathi Braasch, Scott Ness, Jody Becker and Keith Falk have been seminar leaders. The committee wishes to thank Pastor Braasch for leading this valuable opportunity for our candidates again this year.

The committee would like to thank everyone who has volunteered time and effort working with us to support our ministry candidates, particularly the Bishop and his staff. Finally, I offer my personal gratitude to the committee members for their time 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, Chair

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.

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. Jeffray Greene
The Rev. Glen Johnson
Carolyn Nestingen, Esq.
The Rev. Ron Warren

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Report of the NALC Disaster Response Task Force

2014-2015 Task Force Members: Mary Bates (Caldwell, OH), Pr. Michael Giese (Rosenberg, TX), Cheryl Ingraham, (Charleston, WV), Pr. Amy Little, (Norwalk, OH), Pr. David McGettigan (Ocean City, NJ), Jessie Phillips, (Watertown, WI), Pr. Bert Schultz, (Prairie Farm, WI), Pr. Ron Warren (Grove City, OH)

The first full year of formation for the NALC Disaster Response Task Force included:

- **Organization**
- **Information solicitation and sharing**
- **Training for Mission Districts/Congregations**
- **Disaster Response**

Organization

The principal task was to draft and edit a Task Force Mission Statement and a Protocol for Disaster Response for the North American Lutheran Church. The protocol is essentially complete with a few of the attachments to be detailed, at which time it will be posted on the website as the guiding document for the overall program of disaster response.

Task Force members began to take responsibility for various major elements of response: Communication (Amy Little); Donations Management through Women of the NALC (Jessie Philips); Spiritual Care (Bert Schultz and Ron Warren); Training (Mary Bates); Survey/Information (Cheryl Ingraham); Chair (David McGettigan).

The first annual budget was submitted and approved, including funds for a part-time disaster response coordinator, training funding, and warehouse funding for donations management.

We have entered into a covenant with Helping Appalachian Rural People (HARP), a non-profit ministry, to fund a shared warehouse in Caldwell, OH, for collection of basic early response needs such as water, flood/clean-up buckets, Bibles, quilts, etc. We will have access to transportation services to move these products anywhere in the country on an emergency basis, as well as the use of a four-shower trailer for volunteers.

The Task Force also set several goals for 2015 around the four areas outlined in this report.

Effective May 1, the Task Force appointed David McGettigan as disaster response coordinator and negotiated a covenant for contracted services. At the same time, Mary Bates took over responsibility as the chair of the Task Force and head trainer for disaster response.

Information

A major thrust was the design, construction and distribution of a general survey to all NALC congregations to solicit an initial view of the resources and capabilities already available in NALC Mission Districts for disaster response, so that we avoid duplication as well as build on current strengths. In an effort to assure

maximum response the questionnaire was carefully crafted to be simple, focused, but sufficiently in depth to reveal pertinent information. Distribution and return took more time than expected because of the press of other business, as we were blessed to use the services of the NALC national office. The final results were gratifying, with over one-third of congregations responding. Results are being analyzed for planning purposes.

In addition, the Task Force and Mary Bates presented an informational table at the 2014 NALC Convocation in South Carolina and made workshop presentations on disaster preparedness to the following:

- Carolinas Mission District Convocation
- Women of the NALC Mid-Northeast Mission District

At the May Meeting in Columbus, OH, thanks particularly to the efforts of Amy Little, a dedicated NALC disaster response website was developed with Facebook capability. This will be linked to the disaster response page of the NALC website for future informational posting as we produce and organize more and more material to assist and inform congregations and families.

Among the goals for later this year is the launch of Family Preparedness Sunday and a regular feature for family preparedness through congregational awareness and resources.

Training

Among its long range goals, the Task Force seeks to train as many congregations as possible in every Mission District for Disaster Preparedness, Response, and Recovery. In pursuit of that goal, while the Task Force normally meets monthly by web, it did come together face-to-face for a Thursday evening to Saturday noon May meeting in Columbus, OH, principally to be trained as trainers by Mary Bates. We now have a corps of trainers for the future.

2014-2015 saw three Mission District training events:

- March 2014 – South Texas Mission District (18 attendees)
- October 2014 – Ohio Mission District (22 attendees)
- March 2015 – Carolinas Mission District (28 attendees)

In addition, a Servant Youth Event, co-hosted by HARP Mission, is planned for July 12-17 at the NALC Disaster Warehouse in Caldwell, OH. During this event youth will learn how to volunteer in times of disaster, including both early response and long term recovery.

Disaster Response

The Task Force, NALC national office, and NALC congregations were active in response to several new and ongoing disasters. The nature of the response varied from direct service to materials, funding, simple assessment, consultation, or counsel.

- Hurricane Sandy – ongoing funding for rebuilding efforts (3rd year) in Atlantic City, NJ, through St. Andrew By The Sea Evangelical Lutheran Church in conjunction with Atlantic City Long Term Recovery Group.
- Tornadoes and floods in OK – Peace Lutheran, Edmond, OK, responding.

- Tornadoes in Fairfield, IL – First Lutheran, Kirkland, IL, responding.
- Tornadoes in Van, TX – Our Savior Lutheran Church, Tyler, TX, responding, with a volunteer team coming from Peace Lutheran Church, Rosenberg, TX, to assist.
- Flooding in Wimberley, TX (Blanco River area) – multiple congregations of South Texas Mission District assessing and responding.
- Flooding in Houston, TX – multiple congregations of South Texas Mission District, especially Houston area, assessing.

To date over 50 volunteers have donated more than 3,000 hours to families in need.

Six hundred new toys were distributed at Christmas to children who had suffered a disaster in the past year.

Respectfully Submitted,

Mary Bates
NALC Disaster Response Task Force Chair

David M. McGettigan
NALC Disaster Response Coordinator

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Report of the Joint Commission on Theology and Doctrine

The Joint Commission on Theology and Doctrine met three times during the year, including one meeting by conference call. Members of the Joint Commission are Dr. Robert Benne, the Rev. John Bradosky (co-chair), Dr. David Hahm, Dr. Benjamin Johnson, Dr. Glen Johnson, Dr. Maurice Lee, Dr. James Nestingen, the Rev. Eric Riesen, the Rev. Kenneth Sauer, Dr. Amy Schiffrin, the Rev. Paull Spring (convenor), the Rev. Paul Ulring (co-chair), Dr. Larry Yoder, and Dr. Nathan Yoder. During 2015, Dr. Glen Johnson resigned from the Joint Commission. He will be succeeded by Dr. David Yeago.

The Joint Commission gave its attention to a number of theological and ethical issues. A statement on “Christian Care for the Poor,” prepared by Dr. Benne, was endorsed by the Joint Commission and the Executive Council. Presently in preparation are statements on religious freedom, and marriage and sexuality. The Joint Commission continues to discuss the possibility of a statement on the Bible as the Word of God. In response to requests, the Joint Commission approved a paper on discipleship that was written by Dr. Nathan Yoder.

The Task Force on the Office of Deacon received permission to expand its study to include reflection on the nature of the church and the ministry. In addition, the Joint Commission provided counsel and direction for the annual Colloquy for Younger Theologians and for the annual Braaten–Benne Lecture Series.

The Joint Commission also functions as the NALC’s committee on ecumenical relationships. As such, it received reports of the ongoing theological dialogs with the Lutheran Church–Missouri Synod, the Lutheran Church–Canada, and the Anglican Church in North America. It endorsed a series of consultations with the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America and the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada. The Joint Commission has also begun exploring possible NALC membership in the International Lutheran Council.

This August, just before this year’s Convocation, the NALC will host a forum for a possible global coalition of reform movements and churches. Attending will be representatives from the NALC and Lutheran CORE and delegates from Scandinavia, Germany, Slovakia, and Africa. The purpose of this forum will be to consider the formation of a global network of orthodox Lutheran communities.

During the past year, Lutheran CORE decided to reconfigure itself into a reform and renewal movement principally for those who remain within the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. In response to this decision, this year’s Convocation will consider amendments to the NALC Constitution for ratification by NALC congregations. If the amendments are approved, the participation by Lutheran CORE on the Joint Commission will conclude in 2016. The Joint Commission has been blessed by Lutheran CORE contributions over the past five years and prays for God’s blessings on their ongoing ministry and mission.

Respectfully submitted,

The Rev. John F. Bradosky, Co-chair
The Rev. Paul T. Ulring, Co-chair
The Rev. Paull E. Spring, Convenor

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Report of the Nominating Committee

The 2015 Nominating Committee presents the candidates named below for positions to be elected at the August 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 layperson for a two-year term. If a lay candidate did not express preference for a two- or four-year term, the nominee was assigned to a ballot with the intention of keeping the ballots equal in length.

Two individuals are elected each year to the Court of Adjudication.

This year, the Convocation also will elect a Bishop.

This year's candidates are as follows:

Bishop, four-year term (elect one): John Bradosky (incumbent)

Executive Council, clergy, four-year term (elect one): Pastors Tom Hux, Carl Rasmussen, Paul Reiff and Eric Waters

Executive Council, lay, four-year term (elect one): Rosemary Johnson and Stephen Lord

Executive Council, lay, two-year term (elect one): John Elling and Brian Sutton

Court of Adjudication, four-year term (elect two): Carolyn Nestingen (incumbent), Pastor Marty Ramey

The Nominating Committee requested nominations from NALC congregations and NALC members by sending an email 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 Nominating 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 May, June and July, and sent by e-mail to NALC congregations.

The Nominating Committee also received nominations for the 2016 Nominating Committee and forwarded those names to the Executive Council for consideration. The Executive Council submits proposed members of the Nominating 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 Bert Schultz, Chair
Pastor Carter Askren
Pastor Don Brandt
Mr. Harvey Hengst
Pastor Theresa Jacobson

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Report of the Women of the NALC

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

Following our Annual Gathering 2014 in Charleston, South Carolina, The Women's Council began planning for a Fall Team-Building Conference in Wimberley, TX. Six of our eight members were able to make the weekend retreat at a beautiful cabin (not destroyed in recent flooding) a stone's throw from the Blanco River. In our sessions, we focused on many facets of our operations and discussed how to improve our communication tools to network our members throughout the reaches of the NALC. Donations of lodging and food helped minimize our conference expenses.

Bi-monthly publication of our newsletter continued, as well as publication of a September 2014 post-Annual Gathering special edition and a pre-Annual Gathering special edition in July 2015. Our website, www.wnalc.org, was updated periodically with information and forms, and newsletters were archived as they were distributed.

To connect our members, we published some of the stories and photos received about what the women's groups are doing within their own churches and communities. An initiative for volunteers to work with The Women's Council and the committees continues. The 2015 Membership Information Form was published and promoted to keep our roster of voting groups up to date and to receive direct contact information from our member groups/individuals.

Each member of The Women's Council is assigned several Mission Districts in order to better serve the needs of the individual churches within those Mission Districts. Each Council member contacts her respective Mission District Deans, requesting that they provide an email list and/or forward our materials to the churches and/or women's groups. As Council members we share the WNALC newsletter or any other pertinent information. As needed, assistance is given—in person if requested—to women's groups wishing to organize within their region or Mission District.

Our Mission Support Committee was very active this year. Our women's groups researched and recommended projects that they thought were worthy and timely for us to consider supporting. Starting in 2014, the NALC Disaster Response Team began offering disaster response training to each Mission District. The women's groups within our 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. Water Missions International and the NALC ministry partners were among other suggested missions to support.

Expanded functions within each committee are being explored, and here again, require more volunteers to help get the job done. Future plans include expanding our communications to the NALC Network forum, as soon as God provides a tech-savvy member to develop and maintain our pages there! Please keep the WNALC in your prayers and continue to use your time, talents and treasures to His glory.

Respectfully submitted,

Brenda W. Boor, Chair
Jessie Phillips, Vice Chair
The Women's Council for the Women of the NALC

