



2017 Convocation

“Holding Fast, Being (Re)formed”

Committee, Program and Task Force Reports

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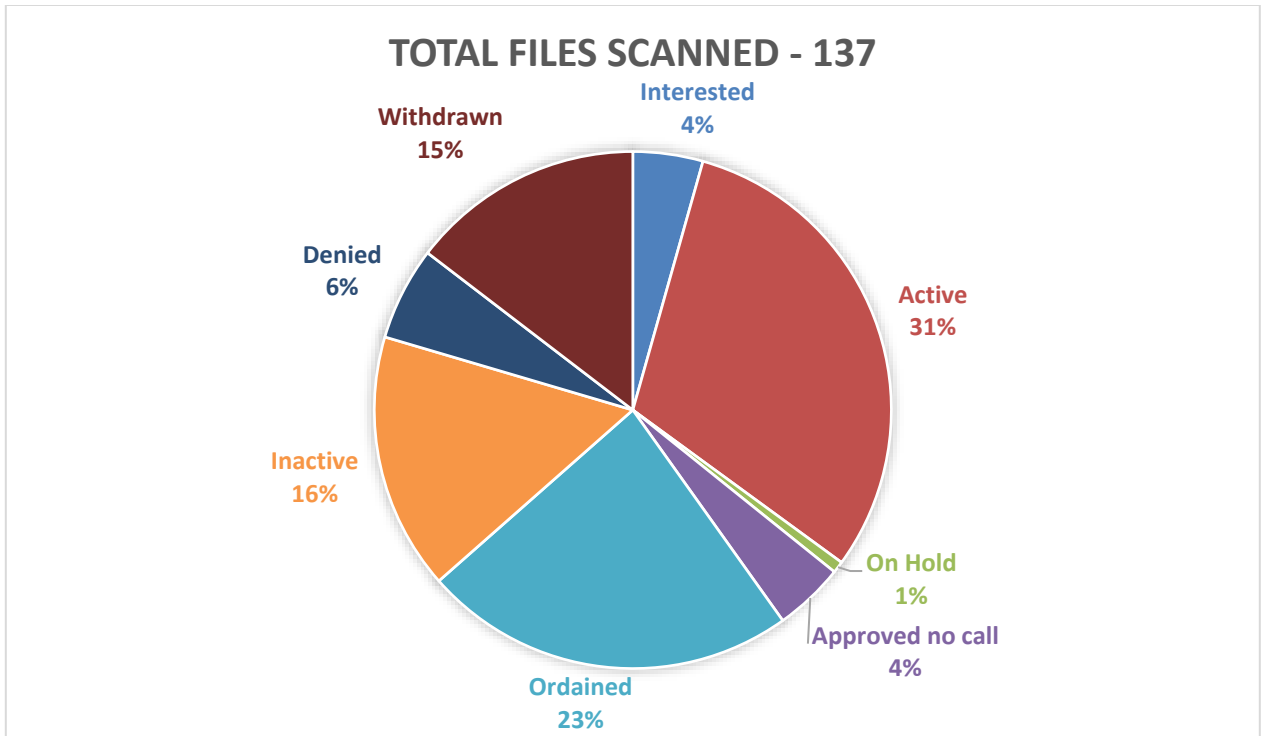
Report of the Candidacy Committee

The Candidacy Committee is currently a 10-member panel of clergy representing the NALC from coast to coast. Those members are: *Bassam Abdallah (Hammond, IN), Cathi Braasch (Jackson Center, OH), Lissette Colon (Orlando, FL), Joyce Dix-Weiers (Elderton, PA), Brad Everett (AB, Canada), John Hopper (Delano, MN), Stephane Kolonji (New Bern, NC), Amy Little (Norwalk, OH), Eric Riesen (Ashland, OH), and Patti Morlock, Chair, (Grove City, OH).*

Together we work to support future leaders of the church. 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 works in 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 that are focused on biblical, theological, and confessional matters. Personal and pastoral references, as well as full criminal background checks and a psychological evaluation, are required of all NALC ministry candidates.

One of our goals this past year was to completely digitize the process, making it more streamlined for the candidates to apply, submit forms, essays and transcripts, and have all files in a readily accessible place for the Candidacy Committee prior to the meetings for better preparation. This has been accomplished and has had the added benefit of allowing us to have a clearer picture of candidacy at large. The chart shows statistics with the files we have currently scanned.



Another goal is to completely rework the various forms and processes so that we have a cohesive manual for future committee members to understand and follow. This is currently in the works and a rough draft should be complete in March of 2018. Finally, we look to have all files currently warehoused at the NALC office in Minnesota scanned and uploaded to the Candidacy program by October of 2017. This will give us a clearer picture of Candidacy from the inception of the NALC instead of just the last few years.

The work of candidacy is important, but it all starts with you. Candidates for ministry in the NALC come from our congregations. We continue to need pastors to serve Christ’s church. Your nurture, care, support, and raising up leaders is the first and all-important step of the candidacy process. Look at members of your congregation and ask yourself, “Who has God gifted for ordained ministry? Who might God be calling to serve in the Office of Holy Ministry?” And then, having identified that person (those people!), work with them and help them in their discernment process. One of our core values is that we are Congregationally Focused; future pastors come from you!

Respectfully submitted on behalf of the committee,

The Rev. Patti Morlock, Chair

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Report of the Task Force on Church and Ministry

Note: The 2016 Report of the Task Force on Church and Ministry was read from the podium at the NALC Convocation in Anaheim but was not distributed to delegates. Because the report included important background information, I have repeated initial paragraphs as preface for our 2017 report. —MHY

In 2012, Dr. David Hahm made a presentation on the ordained diaconate in the history of the church to the Joint Commission on Theology and Doctrine (JCTD). Subsequently, the JCTD recommended that a study group be appointed for the stated purpose of exploring, reflecting upon, and making recommendations back to the JCTD concerning the possibility of an ordained diaconate in the NALC.

With the approval of the Executive Council, Bishop Bradosky, early in 2013, appointed persons to serve on the Diaconate Task Force. Original appointees were Carl Braaten, David Hahm, Candice Johnson, Ryan Schwarz, Marianne Yoder as chair, and David Wendel as staff liaison. Currently, the study group includes David Hahm, Ryan Schwarz, David Yeago, Nathan Yoder, Marianne Yoder, and David Wendel.

Early in the process of our study, members of the group discerned that any consideration of a diaconate had to be founded on questions of ecclesiology and ministry. Biblical, confessional, historical, and ecumenical perspectives all needed to be considered. The group reasoned that diaconal ministry properly should be considered within the broader context of church and ministry. We therefore petitioned the JCTD to expand our mandate so that we could discuss diaconal ministry within its proper framework. At their meeting in November 2014, the JCTD agreed to re-charter our study group as the Task Force on Church and Ministry and to allow us to consult with other scholars/resource persons outside of our group, as needed.

Beginning with our first meeting in February 2014, the task force has convened twice yearly. Our group has studied and discussed papers written by our own task force theologians and historian. We have read and discussed writings including books and journal articles by other Christian scholars, and we have investigated the diaconal ministries in churches that are, or are likely to be, our ecumenical partners. We are committed to a thorough and thoughtful study of ministry, including diaconal ministry.

We are now involved in writing the first section of our report: a proposed statement on ecclesiology and ministry for the NALC. In February 2017, we submitted for discussion Dr. David Yeago's draft of *Church, Order and Ministry*, along with a written response by Dr. Jim Nestingen, to pastors in attendance at the NALC Pastors' Conference in Orlando. Comments and suggestions of participants were recorded and will be considered as we continue to develop our report.

The ongoing work of our task force includes the drafting of a report section exploring ministry in Scripture and in the early church. Also, sections discussing specific needs within the NALC and possible ministry models for addressing those needs are to be developed. As a task force, we have not yet decided if we will recommend a diaconate for our church. We are mindful of the concern for unity in the NALC. We ask for your prayers as we continue this important task.

In closing, I wish to thank the members of the Task Force on Church and Ministry for their continuing efforts and commitment, Pastor David Wendel for his guidance and support, and Bishop Bradosky for his encouragement and confidence in our ability to accomplish our task. I am also grateful to Becky Seifert, Anne Gleason, Fara Pienkosky, and Dr. Amy Schifrin for help with the logistics for our meetings. Above all, thanks be to God.

Respectfully submitted,

Marianne Howard Yoder, Chair

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Report of the Commission on Theology and Doctrine

With the approval of the Executive Council and Bishop John Bradosky, the Commission on Theology and Doctrine was reconstituted this year, with specific terms of office. Serving a one-year term are David Hahm, Eric Riesen, and Paull Spring; two-year terms, Maurice Lee, Amy Schifrin, James Nestingen, and Robert Benne; and three-year terms, Gregory Fryer, Orrey McFarland, David Yeago, and Nathan Yoder. Pastors Fryer and McFarland are new members of the Commission. Bishop emeritus Spring was elected to a one-year term as convenor for the Commission.

The Commission met two times during the past year.

The Commission reviewed the planning process for the Benne–Braaten Lecture Series and for the seminar for younger theologians. The planning team for the theological conference will be reconstituted in time for the 2018 series.

At Dr. Glen Johnson’s suggestion, the Commission reviewed and distributed a set of prayers for Jews and Muslims, with the encouragement that congregations include these communities within their congregational worship.

The Commission continues to appreciate the work of the task force on Church and Ministry. The 2017 pastors’ conference provided time for reflection on a paper, “Church, Order and Ministry,” by Dr. David Yeago. The task force continues to consider the possibility of developing an office within the church that will focus on the ministry of evangelists, catechists, and missionaries.

Throughout the year the Commission spent a considerable amount of time toward developing a document on the Bible as the Word of God. The Commission believes that this document will become a truly significant contribution to the church’s reflection on Biblical authority. Two additional documents are in the initial stages of preparation, one relating to marriage and sexuality, and a second regarding sacramental practices.

The Commission also serves as the ecumenical relationships committee for the NALC. As such, the Commission regularly receives reports from the various dialogs in which the NALC is involved. During this Convocation week, the third series of the Global Forum will meet. This is an informal coalition of movements and churches in Scandinavia, Germany, North America and Africa. This year’s forum will seek to discern how the communities can work together and implement further partnerships in ministry. In addition, the Commission is encouraged by the upcoming meeting of NALC leaders with the leadership of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America and the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada. Additional ecumenical updates are to be found in Pastor David Wendel’s report to this Convocation.

Respectfully submitted,

The Rev. Paull E. Spring, Convener

2017 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,

Jon Evans, Esq.
James H. Gale, Esq.
The Rev. Jeffray Greene
The Rev. Glen Johnson
Carolyn Nestingen, Esq.
The Rev. Marty Ramey
The Rev. David Schafer

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Report of the Disaster Response Task Force

2016-2017 Task Force Members: Mary Bates (Caldwell, OH), Deacon Robert DePugh (St. Petersburg, FL), Pr. Michael Giese (Rosenberg, TX), Jessie Phillips, (Watertown, WI), Pr. Jack Richards (Everett, WA), Pr. Bert Schultz, (WI), Pr. Mark Werner (Latrobe, PA)

The past year has been an active one for the Disaster Response Task Force. Pastor David McGettigan retired; Mary Bates was hired. Training events were held, servant event mission trips were hosted, and numerous disasters impacted thousands of families.

- I. NALC Disaster Response currently is providing active response in Alabama, California, Florida, Georgia, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, Oregon, Pennsylvania, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, Washington and West Virginia (see details below).
 - a. Texas flooding (May 2015): Pastor Claude Villemaire (St. Paul LC, Rosenberg) initially responded, and Pastor Mike Giese (Peace LC, Rosenberg) continues to work with St. James Baptist Church. Discussion was held as to the congregation's potential for growth (Houston continues to grow as a city). Pastor Bert Schultz, task force chair, recommended a 1:3 match: NALC provided \$12,000 and St. James raised the additional \$24,000 to rebuild their historic congregation.
 - b. South Carolina hurricanes/flooding (October 2015 and October 2016): St. Paul (North Charleston) and St. Peter (Lexington) responded to Hurricane Joaquin (Oct. 2015). They hosted volunteers and provided warehousing of material goods donations. St. Peter also responded to Hurricane Matthew (Oct. 2016).
 - c. West Virginia flooding (June 2016): St. Timothy (Charleston WV) responded to 7,512 families flooded out.
 - d. Pennsylvania flooding (June 2016): St. Paul (Latrobe PA) responded to 700 families flooded in Connellsville PA.
 - e. North Carolina hurricane/flooding (October 2016): The Carolinas Mission District responded to Hurricane Matthew, which struck FL, GA, NC, and SC. This Mission District is the first to build a warehouse (Thank you, Advent - Kings Mountain!) and NALC Disaster Response is providing \$15,000 to do so. They also will be the first to form a Mission District Disaster Task Force at the local level (Thank you, Dean Nathan Yoder!).
 - f. Tennessee wildfires (December 2016): Gatlinburg and vicinity experienced wildfires that caused 13 deaths and thousands of dollars in damage.
 - g. California, Oregon, Washington (January 2017): Torrential rainstorms struck the West Coast and caused significant flooding and damage throughout the area. Pastor Jack Richards, Dean of the Northwest Mission District, was the point of contact, providing updated information.
 - h. Alabama, Georgia, Florida, Louisiana and Mississippi (January 2017): Tornadoes struck the South and Mary coordinated volunteers from Ohio to respond in Adele GA.
 - i. Central United States (March and April 2017): A series of severe storms (tornadoes and flooding) struck from Canton, Texas to the Ohio River Valley. More than 14 people died and long term recovery is being coordinated.

- II. **The National Disaster Task Force** met monthly, fulfilling their roles and responsibilities to congregations at the local level. Mary attended the Atlantic MD Convocation and the Carolinas MD Convocation. Disaster Response was represented at the 2016 Convocation in CA.
- III. **Disaster Preparedness/Volunteer trainings** were held in Gallupville, NY and Altoona, IL. Three additional trainings are scheduled for 2017. September is National Preparedness Month. Family and congregational preparedness will be publicized through the NALC's Mission Districts.
- IV. **Servant Event Mission Trips** were hosted at the disaster warehouse in Caldwell, Ohio. More than 50 youth and adults participated. Servant trips were also coordinated at active disaster sites.
- V. **Women of the NALC** supported NALC Disaster Response by collecting early response flood buckets, quilts, school kits, health kits, layettes, gift cards and, most importantly, Bibles!

There are many opportunities to serve in the coming year. The Disaster Response Task Force will continue to communicate through the NALC website, e-newsletter, and the mission districts.

Respectfully submitted

Mary Bates, NALC Disaster Coordinator

2017 North American Lutheran Church Convocation

Report of the Life-to-Life Discipleship Team

Dear Members of the North American Lutheran Church:

I first learned of the discipleship initiative in the NALC about five years ago. I was immediately intrigued. The benefits to the Church were obvious. We Lutherans are sometimes weak in helping individuals and congregations develop a devotional discipline centered in Scripture that equips them to share their faith with others freely and graciously. Unfortunately, a lot of the available resources for cultivating this discipline do not emphasize the confessional gifts we bring. Lutherans have a robust sacramental theology, a rich liturgical heritage, reading the Scriptures with an ear to Law and Gospel, and many other gifts. What if we could use some of these “extra-Lutheran” discipleship resources within our own confessional context, and thus strengthen the gifts we already possess?

Discussions along these lines led to the formation of the Life-to-Life Discipleship Team, of which I serve as chair. Our hope is to help NALC pastors, laity, and entire congregations reclaim the Lutheran confessional emphasis on discipleship and develop catechetical resources for this purpose.

I want to thank all the members of the team for their faithful input, spirited conversation, and commitment to the ministry of Christ’s Church. They include the following pastors and lay leader: Brack East, Bill White, Brian Zaas, Dan Selbo, Daryl Olson, David Keener, Jody Becker, Tom Brodbeck, Mark Daniels, Nathan Yoder, Paul Borg, Paul Larson, T J Anderson, and Joe Valentino (lay). Also, great thanks to Bishop Bradosky and Pastor Wendel for the many ways they support, encourage, and guide our work together. We truly covet your prayers.

I’m happy to report that we are making real progress. To date, here are some of the things we’ve accomplished:

Theological/Biblical Foundations of Discipleship

We’ve worked with some of our theologians to help us better understand the biblical and confessional foundation for discipleship. In particular, we thank Dr. Amy Schiffrin and Dr. Nathan Yoder for their papers on the theme of discipleship. We also looked back at the Lutheran confessional writings as a resource for life-to-life discipleship. For example, Martin Luther’s counsel in the Smalcald Articles:

“We shall now return to the Gospel, which offers counsel and help against sin in more than one way, for God is surpassingly rich in his grace: First, through the spoken word, by which forgiveness of sin (the peculiar function of the Gospel) is preached to the whole world; second, through Baptism; third, through the holy Sacrament of the Altar; fourth, through the power of the keys; and finally, *through the mutual conversation and consolation of brethren. Matt. 18:20, “Where two or three are gathered, etc.”* – Smalcald Articles Part III, Article IV [emphasis added]

Again, in Luther’s longer preface to his Large Catechism, “Nothing is so effectual against the devil, the world, the flesh, and all evil thoughts as to occupy oneself with the Word of God, talk about it, and meditate on it.”

It is this “mutual conversation and consolation” around Holy Scripture which we hope to renew in every congregation of the NALC.

Building a Congregational Culture of Discipleship:

The Life-to-Life Discipleship Team recently spent several days in Columbus learning about a process of leading congregations in building a “culture of discipleship.” How do we develop a practical process to assist congregations in forming Christians — growing disciples to maturity in the faith? In articulating an answer to that question, we need to be realistic and honest. Discipleship is protracted fellowship with Christ in His Word (John 8:31), marked by obedience to His commandments and confidence in His promises. There is no “assembly line” process by which Christians are automatically and painlessly built. Rather, discipleship involves the ongoing catechesis of the Church described in Acts 2:42: “They devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers” (ESV). The heart of this devotion and the center of all holy conversation is the task of daily repentance in Holy Baptism and the adherence to Christ’s forgiveness, the active engagement of faith emerging from and returning to the celebration of Holy Communion.

The NALC Life-to-Life Discipleship initiative aims for a congregationally-focused renewal of Christ-centered conversation. There are several steps we must take to guide the cultures of our congregations in this direction:

1. To encourage pastors in their ministry and guard against the negligence of their office (see Luther’s Longer Preface to the Large Catechism) we will immerse them in holy conversation with one another. We will salt the ministerium with a cadre of trained clergy who are willing to invest in our pastors by providing them with prayerful support, insight, and accountability. We will cultivate awareness of this need for intentional coaching and spiritual guidance at every stage of ministerial development.
2. Pastors will form life-to-life leadership teams in their congregations to engage in mutual conversation: prayer and reflection on Scripture and the Catechism, bearing one another’s burdens, encouraging one another in vocational discipline, and sharing the joys of Christ’s blessings.
3. In the fullness of time, members of these teams will in turn serve as leaders for additional small groups in their congregations. They will give intentional focus to raising up long-term baptismal sponsors, discipleship mentors for both children and adult converts, and catechetical instructors for ongoing faith formation.

The baptized will thus be actively devoted to the apostles’ teaching (Acts 2:42) and equipped in the Spirit to declare what it means to confess the Lordship of Christ in every calling of life. They will understand the urgency of holding fast to Christ together in Word and Sacrament, and they will mature in confidence in leading prayer and discussing the faith. They will henceforth be prepared to make disciples through mission and evangelism by speaking the truth in love (Ephesians 4:15), suffering in the world for the sake of Christ’s name (Acts 9:16), and modeling His commandment to love one another (John 13:34).

Practical First Steps/Goals toward Life-to-Life Discipleship in the NALC

1. Developing a pathway/process to train NALC coaches/spiritual guides who will engage with interns and first call pastors in the discipline of prayerful, Christ-centered conversation.
2. Providing all first call pastors with this personal investment of guidance and accountability.

3. Enlisting and equipping 20 NALC pastors with prior training and experience to serve as spiritual guides by the 2018 Convocation, and identifying an additional 40 pastors by December 2017 who are willing to train for service in this ministry.
4. Developing a list of recommended resources, including speakers who can explain the importance of Life-to-Life discipleship. Related to this is the hope of hosting a joint conference on discipleship in the fall of 2018 with the Anglican Church in North America.

To close this report, one word that comes up regularly in conversation about discipleship is *intentionality*. When all is said and done, pastors and lay leaders will need to be intentional in their work to cultivate a “mutual conversation and consolation” centered in Scripture in the life of their parishes. God willing, the congregations of the NALC will become adept at raising up disciples who are equipped to confess Christ in the world and ever ready to share and explain what it means to “be his, live under him in his kingdom, and serve him in everlasting righteousness, innocence, and blessedness” (Small Catechism 2:4).

If you have ideas, comments, or suggestions, please email me at emriesen@trinityashland.org.

Yours in Christ,

Pastor Eric M. Riesen, Chair
Senior Pastor, Trinity Lutheran Church
Ashland, OH

2017 North American Lutheran Church Convocation

Report of the NALC Canada Section

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

One of the great blessings in the North American Lutheran Church has been for Canadian Lutherans to get to know and become reacquainted with our brothers and sisters in Christ across the border. Canada is vast in its geography and it is easy to feel isolated from one another. The support, encouragement, and joy in those opportunities to be gathered together by the Spirit, especially across nationalistic divides, has enriched our own discipleship. Convocation is a wonderful opportunity to “gather” together in Christ.

The Canada Section of the NALC is the legal expression in Canada of the NALC. It operates as a Canadian corporation to address the legal challenges of being a “cross-border” church. Much of our work might seem dry, but it is essential in our accountability as citizens of Canada. The challenge has been to also structure our relationships so that we are also accountable to the larger church and to congregations of the NALC in Canada. We have been working on clarifying the structure of such relationships from a practical point of view. Like our brothers and sisters throughout the NALC, congregations in Canada relate to a Mission District (the Canadian Mission District). The Canada Section has spent considerable effort in the past year seeking to visually express how best to represent this bridging role in order that we might all be on the same page regarding policies and governance decisions in the future. In order to represent the needs of Canadian congregations, the Canada Section looks to the Canadian Mission District (presently only one) as an advisory committee of the NALC-CS. This allows congregations to have direct input into the budget priorities of the NALC operating in Canada. While a few of the tasks are reserved for the Canada Section, such as scholarships, seminary support, benevolence for the administration of the NALC (in Canada and beyond), study opportunities (like the Canadian Rockies Theological Conference), and other tasks normally delegated to the larger church, most of the work of ministry and mission takes place through the Canadian Mission District. Essentially, it then operates as a working group of the NALC-CS. For example, the charitable status and financial accounts rest with the Canada Section, and so the Mission District requests funds for its work, but it has also recommended the budget as an advisory committee of the Canada Section. This allows the Canada Section to then report its financial activities to the government and submit annual reports regarding how charitable funds were directed (a requirement in Canada perhaps unfamiliar to the NALC in the US).

It has become apparent that a clarification needs to be addressed to NALC congregations in Canada. The NALC-Canada is the legal expression of the NALC as a Canadian charity. It is not a different “level” of the NALC. Because of Canadian tax law, charities in Canada cannot act as a conduit for money going to organizations that do not have charitable status in Canada, unless that work is being done “on behalf of” and with oversight by a Canadian charity. With respect to benevolence, the NALC-CS is the charitable organization of the NALC in Canada. While significant support is made to the Seminary and the work of the NALC in the US on our behalf, this is done through formal and informal “contract for services” arrangements. The NALC-CS cannot simply “forward” benevolence outside of the country. Congregations may choose to designate support for the Seminary, which will be designated for that ministry, but should not expect that benevolence to the “NALC” would be forwarded out of country. Again, the NALC-CS is the NALC operating in Canada, even if it helps with the administrative costs of the NALC operating as a whole. If you are interested, a copy of the organizational chart, referred to above, helps explain all the above structure and governance map.

In order that the NALC-CS is not seen as operating independently from the NALC, the composition of the Board is illustrative. At our recent annual AGM in Canmore, the Canada Section received appointments of

new members. Three of these appointments to the Canada Section Board are made by the Bishop of the NALC. They are: Rev. Mark Chavez, Mr. Ryan Schwartz, and Rev. Timothy Lundeen. The other four members (Canadian law requires the majority to be from Canada) are elected by Canadian congregations at the Mission District Convocation and appointed through the NALC Convocation. They are: Rev. Kevin Ree, Rev. Rolf Bjornstad, and Mr. Ralph Wold. There is one vacancy due to the resignation of Teresa Peters on account of her being a student candidate. The Mission District has elected Julie Eskeland to fill this position; she will be appointed at the next NALC Convocation. From this Board, officers are elected. They are: Kevin Ree, chair; Timothy Lundeen, vice-chair; Rolf Bjornstad, secretary; and the Treasurer of the Mission District appointed as the Treasurer of the NALC-CS. Along with the Treasurer, the Bishop and the Dean are also officers of the NALC-CS but without vote. This allows them to be compensated for their work without creating a “conflict of interest.”

This past year, just over \$80,000.00 was received from Canadian sources. Of this amount, over \$11,000.00 was forwarded to the NALC-US, over \$28,000.00 was remitted for Seminary support, over \$15,000.00 was provided as Seminarian support, \$2,660 was given to help defray the cost of the Canadian Rockies Theological Conference, over \$3,000 was provided to support a NALC Canadian national youth gathering, and \$5,000.00 was sent directly to CLWR (Canadian Lutheran World Relief) for disaster relief because the Ft. McMurray fire. Canadian congregations were very appreciative that the NALC also sent \$10,000.00 US to Canada, which was forwarded to CLWR to help in relief efforts from that devastating fire. The rest of the expenses were for meetings, travel reimbursement, and a grant to the Dean’s congregation to compensate for the time spent away from the parish to serve the needs of a vast Mission District. Full Financial Reports and Budget Actuals and for 2017 and 2018 are available.

This past year, representatives of the NALC-CS met with representatives of the CLWR (Canadian Lutheran World Relief) Board to explore a deeper partnership with CLWR in its work. Presently, NALC congregations appear only as a list of donors. The NALC is clearly interested in engaging with CLWR and contributing in various ways, “including at the policy level and in future development of CLWR strategic directions.” Rev. Bjoern Meinhardt (Winnipeg) has been designated as the NALC-CS representative to CLWR. We are awaiting a decision from the CLWR Board as to how they see this partnership developing. We are hoping for more than “observer” status since many of our congregations have a long relationship with CLWR, through many different Lutheran bodies, over the past 70 years.

As a new Lutheran church body, there remains much work to be done by the Canada Section of the NALC. Ministry partners need to be identified in Canada, for many of the organizations that partner with the NALC in the US do not have charitable status in Canada. Salary guidelines need to be updated, and policies need to be drafted, both with respect to governance as well as areas such as scholarships and bursaries for Canadian students. Since there are NALC congregations in all four western provinces, the Canada Section needs to make sure that we are properly registered in each province. We need to secure general commercial liability insurance for the NALC-CS as well as the Canadian Mission District, and the list goes on. All this work is done mostly behind the scenes, so that congregations and mission districts can be supported in their ministry.

We hope that you will take the opportunity to gather as the NALC also in Canada. Please join us for our annual Canadian Rockies Theological Conference. You will not want to miss Malcolm Guite and Steve Bell this coming year. We also hope your youth will join us for a national Youth Gathering in Winnipeg next Spring around the May long weekend (Victoria Day! May 18-21).

Grace upon grace,

The Rev. Kevin Ree, Chair

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

The following individuals served as members of the Board of Regents (BOR) of the North American Lutheran Seminary (NALS) during the past year:

M. Roy Schwarz, M.D., Chair
Donna Evans, Vice Chair
Rev. Donna Smith, Secretary
Rev. Wendy Berthelsen
Rev. Cathi Braasch
Bishop John Bradosky
Rev. Phillip Gagnon
Rev. Jeffray Greene
Rev. Dieter Punt
Bishop Paull Spring

Developments in 2016 – 2017

BOR Members:

One member completed his term (Frank Merrell) and one resigned (the Rev. Mark Ryman). One new BOR member was elected at the 2016 Convocation. The BOR was pleased to welcome the Rev. Dr. Cathi Braasch to our group.

Five-Year Strategic Plan:

During the past year, the BOR developed a five-year strategic plan for the NALS. The following statements describe the possible development of the seminary's ministry over the course of the next five years (2017-2022).

- **Vision Statement of the Seminary:**

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.

The Board of Regents will engage in an ongoing effort to vision and create a Lutheran seminary that, within the core values of the North American Lutheran Church (NALC), will address the reality of ministry in today's evolving cultures.

- **Relationship with the North American Lutheran Church:** The NALS will continue to be a seminary of the church, specifically the NALC. The seminary will be accountable to the church and

will prepare competent persons to serve in the church's ministry. The church will encourage seminarians to secure their theological education and pastoral formation through the NALS.

- **Relationship with Trinity School for Ministry:** Over the next five years, the NALS will continue its partnership with the Trinity School for Ministry. The seminary "Center" will continue to be located at the Ambridge, PA campus. As may be appropriate, the Memorandum of Understanding between Trinity and the NALS will be reviewed and updated.
- **Student Expectations:** The NALS will continue to prepare leaders for the NALC and the wider church. Students will be formed by prayer, life in community, private devotions, and other spiritual disciplines; will be committed to the teachings of the Bible according to the Lutheran Confessions; and will be equipped to serve the church in discipleship, mission, and outreach.
- **Student Body:** By the year 2022, the seminary anticipates serving 30-40 students.
 - M. Div. degree, 20-25 students, including 15-17 residential students, and 5-8 on line students;
 - M. A. degree, 15-20 students, including 5-7 residential students, and 10-15 online students.
 - Depending on the requirements of the Candidacy Committee and the number of students attending an extension center, the seminary anticipates additional "special" students.
- **Faculty:** By 2022, the NALS teaching faculty will include three full-time faculty and one full-time equivalent (comprised of part-time service by different instructors) as adjunct faculty. Trinity faculty will round out the remainder of our students' education.
- **Administration:** By the year 2022, the administration of the seminary will be configured as follows:
 - A President, whose primary ministry will be administration – student recruitment and development. The President will have a minimal role in teaching.
 - A Provost, who will assist in administering the seminary, overseeing extension centers, communications, and other ministries that will be developed.
 - An Administrative Assistant, who will be responsible for secretarial tasks, correspondence and other ministries as will be determined.
 - The seminary will contract services in the development and communications disciplines as necessary.
 - The registrar for Trinity School for Ministry will serve as registrar for the NALS.
- **Beyond the Seminary Center in Ambridge, PA:** The following permanent and temporary locations for NALS expansion will be explored.
 - *Extension Centers.* During the next five years, the seminary will establish two to three Extension Centers, to be located across North America. To develop these, the seminary will set forth a design for the extension centers that will include location, faculty, courses of study, and other related matters.
 - *Houses of Studies.* At this time, the formation of Houses of Studies will be explored and studied by the BOR, with possible implementation at some point beyond 2022.

- **Continuing Education:** The NALS will take the lead in developing a design for Continuing Education for NALC pastors and congregational leaders. This design will include equipping ministers for mission and discipleship. The seminary will work in cooperation with other NALC entities as the plan develops and is implemented.
- **Accreditation:** The NALS will work through the accreditation process of the Association of Theological Schools and will aim toward becoming an Associate Member of the Association during the next seven years.

For the sake of the church's fidelity to the Word of God and out of a commitment to the church's mission to spread the Gospel to all people, the Board of Regents of the North American Lutheran Seminary presents this Strategic Plan as a guide and blueprint for the next five years of its ministry.

Students:

NALS continues to have a very positive effect on Trinity School for Ministry and its student body, and the reverse is also true.

The future of the seminary depends on developing a stream of students who feel the call to the ministry. This is a major challenge for the entire NALC and success at doing this will, in large part, determine whether the Five-Year Strategic Plan is achieved and the seminary continues to develop as planned. May God continue to guide us in our efforts.

Thank you for your continuing support.

Respectfully submitted,

M. Roy Schwarz, M.D., Chair

2017 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 and Saviour, Jesus Christ!

We have just completed another rich and full academic year. Four of our 12 full-time residential students received M.Div. degrees this year and are headed out to internships or first calls. A host of part-time and online students continue to come to the Seminary Center for one-week Intensives and study at their homes the rest of the year. All our students continue to be formed for pastoral ministry or lay vocations in church leadership. Gathering each day for prayer, study and fellowship, with others at the campus of our host institution, Trinity School for Ministry, we see our seminarians grow in confidence in their witness, in depth of theological wisdom, and in attainment of the everyday skills necessary to communicate the gospel in parishes, mission outposts, and the wider community.

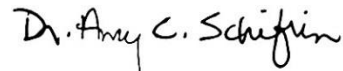
As we seek to grow to fulfill the pastoral needs of the NALC, much of our energy this year went towards establishing relationships with undergraduate schools. We are seeking to create a "pipeline" of students whose formation will be in an intentional process throughout their undergraduate years. We are currently in conversation with five undergraduate schools across the U.S. and working towards establishing joint programs that streamline the current seven-year (four undergraduate years plus three seminary years) plus an internship/vicarage year into five or six years plus an internship/vicarage year. Qualified undergraduate students will participate in an accelerated program in which they are taking Master's level courses during their senior year of college. Students will be able to transfer this course work towards their first year of studies at the NALS, thus cutting down on student debt and making them available for pastoral call in a shorter time. Traditional 4+3 programs will still be available, and students from many accredited undergraduate institutions will be able to attend seminary, but this will add one more path for highly motivated students to accomplish their academic goals in preparation for pastoral ministry.

I am pleased to announce that the first college with whom we have a **Memorandum of Understanding** is Concordia College in Bronxville, NY (<http://www.concordia-ny.edu>). We will be announcing more agreements as they come to fruition during the next academic year. Within four to five years the first NALC students who have entered these undergraduate programs will be entering the NALS. This is an excellent opportunity for us to work in partnerships for a fuller formation of our pastoral candidates. These relationships with undergraduate institutions will help us to move toward the establishment of NALS extension sites (our hub and spokes model) throughout North America. As we plant the flag for the NALS in multiple cities we hope to grow our student body to meet the church's need for qualified orthodox, confessional and evangelical Lutheran pastors.

The Seminary Center's relationship with Trinity School for Ministry continues to thrive. The courses that are Lutheran specific and taught by our NALS faculty are complemented by those that are taught by our ecumenical colleagues. We are a Christian community, bound together in love, bearing witness to the work of Christ in our lives. Our students are learning to articulate and confess their faith as Lutheran Christians in ways that are respectful yet clear, bold and yet humble. I see them daily grow in faith and wisdom as their presence is a gift to their Anglican, Episcopal, and Presbyterian neighbors, just as their neighbors are a gift to them. Our NALS students are learning a model that we hope they will live out in the communities to which they are called, a model in which Christian love for the neighbor guides their words and deeds.

The NALS is your seminary, the seminary of the NALC. On behalf of the next generation of faithful Lutheran pastors, it is my sincerest hope that you will continue your generous and prayerful support, that you will continue to help your congregational members of every age discern if God is calling them into Word and Sacrament Ministry, and that each of you would keep our seminarians, faculty, and staff in your daily prayers, so that together we would walk graciously and joyously into the future that God is preparing for those who love him.

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

2017 North American Lutheran Church Convocation

Report of the Nominating Committee

The 2017 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, two individuals will be elected to four-year terms on the Court of Adjudication.

In addition, the NALC Canada Section has asked the Convocation to affirm the appointment of Julie Eskeland to fill the remainder of a two-year term on the Section Board that was vacated by the resignation of Teresa Peters.

Every other year, the Convocation elects three persons to six-year terms on the NALS Board of Regents. Since elections were held in 2016 and there have been no resignations or other vacancies on the BOR, no elections are necessary this year.

The 2017 candidates are as follows:

Executive Council, clergy, four-year term (elect one): Pr. Mark Braaten, Pr. Roy Harrisville III, Pr. Ralph Reitmeyer

Executive Council, lay, four-year term (elect one): Ms. Rebecka Andrae, Ms. Pamela Charas, Mr. Brian Sutton

Court of Adjudication, four-year term (elect two): Pr. Jeffray Greene, Mr. Lyle Hollander

The Nominating Committee requested nominations from NALC congregations and NALC members by sending an email notification to congregations and by including an announcement in the *NALC News* that nominations were requested. Individuals nominated were asked to provide biographical information using a form developed by the committee.

Biographical information on the candidates was published in accordance with the NALC Constitution, which requires the Nominating Committee to provide information on the candidates 90 days prior to the Convocation. In accordance with NALC Constitutional requirements, the list of candidates and their qualifications was posted on the NALC website on May 8, 2017, published in the *NALC News* for May and sent by e-mail to NALC congregations. Although sufficient nominations were received during the nominating period ending 90 days prior to the Convocation, a reminder about the possibility of making additional nominations was included with the biographical information published in May. No additional nominations were received by the committee within the additional nomination period that ended 45 days prior to the Convocation, on June 26, 2017.

The Nominating Committee also forwarded nominee names for the 2018 Nominating Committee to the Executive Council for consideration. The Executive Council submits proposed members of the Nominating Committee for confirmation by the Convocation.

We are grateful to have received 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,

The Rev. Bert Schultz, Co-Chair

Mr. Marc Voigt, Co-Chair

The Rev. Cathi Braasch

The Rev. Don Brandt

Ms. Shelly Ree

2017 North American Lutheran Church Convocation

Report of the Stewardship Task Force

The Stewardship Task Force was formed in 2015 and consists of Pastors Gerry Miller, Mark Graham, Dona Johnson, Cathi Braasch, and Eugene Grimm. Dr. David Wendel, Assistant to the Bishop for Ministry and Ecumenism, and Ryan Schwarz, NALC treasurer, also work with the task force.

The goals of the Stewardship Task Force are, among other things, to:

- Inform congregations regarding the mission and ministry of the NALC as a whole, including the Great Commission Society and the North American Lutheran Seminary, with the intention of strengthening those ministries and their outside financial support.
- Encourage and assist congregations to grow in their total mission support (to all missions/ministries) to 12-15% of congregational income, with equal support to local, continental and global ministries, as well as to the larger church.
- Help congregations celebrate the work we do together.
- Evaluate and assess how development will “work” in the NALC, including the relationship to the North American Lutheran Seminary.
- Inspire joy and eagerness to give, for ministry.
- Develop stewardship-oriented council devotions.
- Communicate announced goals for annual giving in the NALC to meet its budget.
- Evaluate and assess endowments (congregational, NALC, NALS).

Pr. Gerry Miller has completed a four-part stewardship Bible study that will be available on our website soon. We encourage congregations to use this study in:

- Church council meetings,
- Sunday school classes,
- Small group gatherings,
- And in conjunction with our *Duty and Delight Stewardship Program*.

We will also be publishing the *Duty and Delight Stewardship Program* on our website. The primary purpose of a stewardship program is to assist and enable our members to grow in spiritual discipline, especially as it relates to giving. Whether conducted in the fall or in the spring, we encourage congregations to use this program.

Finally, one important aspect of our work together is to lift up the mission and ministry of our NALC. The NALC is not a hierarchical Church, but there are some things that we as a denomination can do better together. We want to encourage our congregations, when preparing budgets for the coming year, to ***prayerfully*** consider growing in mission support to the NALC by one percent of current congregational

giving. In addition to this, we encourage our member congregations to at least tithe to their benevolences beyond the congregation.

We are submitting a resolution encouraging congregations to increase their giving to the NALC by one percent of their congregational income until they reach a minimum of eight percent of their income.

Respectfully submitted,

The Rev. Eugene Grimm

2017 North American Lutheran Church Convocation

Report of the Executive Council Task Force on Structure

With the approval of the Executive Council and Bishop John Bradosky, the Executive Council Task Force on Structure was formed in April 2016 and consists of four members of the Executive Council: Rev. Melinda Jones, Rev. Mark Braaten, Mr. Richard Jansak, and Mr. Brian Sutton. Brian Sutton serves as Chair. The stated purpose of the task force is to evaluate the current organization structure of the NALC, identify its stress points and develop a structure model that will alleviate those stress points and reinforce our core value of being congregationally focused.

The task force has met ten times face to face during the past year and exchanged countless emails, texts, and phone calls. Additionally, the chair presented an update of the work of the task force at the Deans' annual meeting in November 2016 and the Carolinas Mission District Convocation in May 2017.

The task force reviewed detailed information regarding structure of other denominations obtained through in-depth interviews with the denominations' leadership, who shared both what worked and did not work well for them.

The task force obtained complimentary temporary use of computer software designed to provide mapping capabilities that allowed it to graphically view the distribution of all NALC parishes across North America. This is an essential step in evaluating size, grouping and location of mission districts.

The task force has followed proven project phases, beginning with Information Gathering, followed by Analysis & Evaluation, Model Development and, finally, Implementation. We are currently in the Model Development phase of our work.

The Model Development phase is being driven by results of the Analysis & Evaluation, which clearly point to the need of creating regionalized groupings of Mission Districts. This will allow for the number of parishes in Mission Districts to be reduced, thus enabling Deans to better support their pastors. Redefinition and clarification of the role of Dean will also be addressed. This is all essential to making the NALC truly "Congregationally Focused."

Much work remains to be done in the coming months as we enter a time of information distribution, discussion, and response to feedback from stakeholders.

Respectfully submitted,

Brian E. Sutton, Chair

2017 North American Lutheran Church Convocation

Report of the Women of the NALC

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

As we, the Women's Council of the WNALC, finish another year of service, it is time to reflect on what has been accomplished. But first and foremost, we would like to extend our gratitude to our congregational women's groups for their support and prayers, which have enabled us keep them connected with other groups and to assist them in their missions.

During our council's retreat, hosted at St. Peter's Evangelical Lutheran Church, Lexington, SC (Clyde Sander's church), it was determined that we must "Define, Develop, Do". "Define" issues that need to be corrected or clarified; "Develop" a plan of action to accomplish the need; and "Do" it (apply it). I believe we have done just that this year.

We were finally able to ratify our Operational Guidelines through the hard work of our vice-chair, Linda Brower. Although few major changes were implemented, several editorial changes were made for clarification. One change is that our committees are now referenced as "teams," because it is through teamwork that we accomplish the greater good for the WNALC. As our organization grows, our teams will develop to ensure that we adhere to our guidelines to meet the needs of the women within our NALC congregations.

We purchased a new interface for our website, www.wnalc.org, which our volunteer computer expert, Juhree Polkowski, graciously set up for us. The new website is now up and running; however, it is still in the development stage. We will continue to work to make it more "user friendly" for our members.

Our newsletter, which is now published 6 times a year, has been improved by Lane Magera, a member of our Communications Team, and can be found on the WNALC website. In addition, each congregation with an email address in the NALC database receives a copy through mass distribution by the NALC Minnesota office, thanks to Anne Gleason.

The Mission Bank concept, implemented several years ago, has been a success, with a total of \$8,460.84 collected during 2016. The WNALC presented half the mission bank gifts to SOLA Publishing and the other half to World Mission Prayer League in support of St. Luke's Theological College in South Sudan. Through the hard work of our Mission Support Team and the generosity of our members, the mission bank concept will continue for the foreseeable future.

All in all, it was a very productive year. We hope and pray that, with God's guidance and the continued support from the NALC and our members, we will continue to be of service to the WNALC and for the glory of God.

Respectfully submitted,

Jessie Phillips, Chair
The Women's Council for the Women of the NALC

2017 North American Lutheran Church Convocation

Report of the Youth and Family Ministry Program (faithwebbing.com)

Faithwebbing.com recently completed its first full year of providing web-based youth ministry coaching services to NALC congregations.

It has been a pleasure to connect with churches, partners, and affiliates throughout the United States and Canada. The greatest joy we have experienced is connecting with individual churches and church members as we learn and grow together.

Here is a synopsis of the first full year...

- Gary and Laurie attended 2016 Lutheran Week in Anaheim, where we presented at the WNALC meeting, led workshops, hosted a ministry display table and were Convocation keynote speakers.
- Continued development of the website, adding 50+ youth ministry template forms and 70+ video clips from the monthly webinars.
- Eight monthly webinars were offered during the school year, walking through the list of more than 30 Faith Skills. Average live attendance was about 150 with another 100 viewing the full-length video version within a few days.
- Monthly webinars were then edited down to smaller topical clips for easier viewing and posted on the website.
- A set of books (*Faith Webbing* and *What's in Your Bag?*) were distributed to all NALC congregations.
- Continued development of the communications system through email distribution lists and the NALC Network.
- A "Ventures in Youth Ministry Symposium" has been added to the 2017 Lutheran Week schedule.
- A year-long Outcome-based Youth Ministry (OBYM) intentional coaching program was launched.
- A partnership with the Nexus Institute in Des Moines, Iowa was formed.
- Verbal updates are given at each NALC staff meeting and written updates appear in the monthly NALC newsletter.

Several exciting projects are in the works for the coming year, as we continue to network our congregations together in life and faith and ministry.

Respectfully submitted,

Gary and Laurie Pecuch

