



Questions and Answers

Proposal for The North American Lutheran Seminary

1. Why do we need an NALC seminary?

Although our NALC seminarians are currently studying at many different denominational (and non-denominational) seminaries, they are not receiving theological education reflective of the NALC's unique DNA—as “Christ-Centered, Mission-Driven, Traditionally-Grounded and Congregationally-Focused.” We wish to provide them with training as pastors to serve NALC congregations, committed to the truth of God's authoritative Word which comes to us as Law and Gospel, reflected in the Lutheran Confessions. Our students are required to study the Lutheran Confessions and Reformation history at other seminaries, but this is different from having students study these within the context of an NALC seminary. Having our own NALC Seminary faculty also provides our theologians with opportunities to teach as NALC professors, gives us a stronger Biblical and confessional voice within the larger Lutheran and ecumenical educational context, and encourages the education and development of NALC teaching theologians for the future.

2. How will the NALC seminary be different from existing seminaries?

The proposal of our Theological Education Task Force includes two components: a Seminary Center located at Trinity School for Ministry (TSM) in Ambridge, PA, and Houses of Studies located within NALC Mission Districts. The two components will make up the whole of the North American Lutheran Seminary. This will allow NALC students who wish to study at the Seminary Center to take classes in a traditional setting with other NALC students, or they may choose to attend one of our Houses of Studies nearer to home, either as a commuter or as a residential student, if that is offered. This provides our students with much more flexibility, depending on their personal and familial circumstances. Similarly, our students could begin their NALC theological education at the Seminary Center or a House of Studies, and then complete it at the other, as desired. Our entire NALC Seminary system will offer one coordinated curriculum so that all students are receiving the same theological education regardless whether they are studying at the Seminary Center or a House of Studies.

3. Will NALC seminarians be able to study at non-NALC seminaries/Houses of Studies?

Although seminarians will be able to study at non-NALC seminaries, the availability of NALC Seminary locations will allow us to encourage our seminarians to study at either the NALC Seminary Center or one of our Houses of Studies. Permission may be granted by the NALC Candidacy Committee for seminarians to study elsewhere, but this would be granted on a case-by-case basis. Certainly, seminarians already studying at non-NALC seminaries will be allowed to complete their studies at that seminary, if they so choose. Where there is no NALC Seminary House of Studies nearby, our seminarians will still have the option of studying at existing non-NALC seminaries.

4. Will NALC seminarians be able to receive their theological education completely “online” or through “distance learning”?

Normally, this will not be the case; however, all of our students will have many options for taking classes on campus, online or through some form of distance learning. It should be noted that the NALC proposal moves us in the direction of having all our seminarians receive degrees from accredited institutions. This strengthens the ministry of the NALC while also protecting our pastors who may wish to seek advanced degrees in the future. Most schools require graduate students to have degrees from accredited institutions. That being said, our NALC Seminary in all its parts will have an online, distance-learning component that will allow students at Houses of Studies to take classes from the Seminary Center, and students at the Seminary Center to take classes from Houses of Studies. They may also take such classes from other institutions, such as Institute of Lutheran Theology and St. Paul Seminary, but these must be approved by the NALC Candidacy Committee on a case-by-case basis. It may be possible for some NALC seminarians to take all classes online or through distance learning, if necessary, but this would not be the norm and would need to be approved by the NALC Candidacy Committee.

5. Who will determine the curriculum required of NALC seminarians?

The Theological Education Task Force has already prepared an initial curriculum. This will be presented to the NALC Candidacy Committee and Executive Staff for their input. Once a director is called to the newly-created Seminary Director position, he or she will review the proposed curriculum and make suggestions. Ultimately, the NALC Executive Council will approve of the curriculum. The Board of the Seminary, once established, will provide oversight and ongoing development of the curriculum. It will be the task of the Seminary Director to work closely with the Candidacy Committee and House of Studies directors to coordinate and integrate the NALC curriculum into existing programs of the host seminaries. The NALC Candidacy Committee will have the final word with regard to whether NALC curriculum requirements have been met by particular students, with oversight and approval happening throughout the seminarian’s education.

6. How can we be certain NALC seminarians are being properly formed as NALC pastors, given the distributed nature of this theological education plan?

All NALC seminarians will be gathered once or twice a year for a residency, either at the Seminary Center or one of the Houses of Studies. These may be one or two weeks in length and will include Bible study, pastoral formation, reflection upon how the Lutheran Confessions are integrated into pastoral ministry within the NALC, etc. At these meetings, seminarians will interact with the faculty of the NALC Seminary system, the NALC bishop, staff and other resource persons as needed. The goal will be the formation of confessionally Lutheran pastors.

7. Speaking of faculty, how will the NALC proposal ensure that faculty at the NALC Seminary Center and Houses of Studies are supportive of the NALC and our understanding of Holy Scripture and Biblical moral and ethical teaching?

Those who teach at the NALC Seminary Center and Houses of Studies will comprise one faculty. NALC faculty will be required to be members of NALC congregations or members of Lutheran CORE, and they must agree with and support the mission and ministry of the NALC, teaching in accordance with Holy

Scripture, the Creeds and the Lutheran Confessions, as well as the constitution of the NALC. Non-NALC/Lutheran CORE faculty may be called to teach with approval of the Board of the NALC Seminary and the Executive Council. The NALC faculty will meet regularly for faculty meetings and to cooperate and coordinate the work of theological education within the NALC Seminary.

8. To whom will the NALC Seminary be accountable?

The NALC Seminary in all its parts will be accountable to the board of the NALC Seminary, comprised of nine to fifteen ordained pastors and laity of the NALC. The seminary, staff, faculty and board will be accountable to the NALC Executive Council, which is ultimately accountable to the NALC Convocation. Members of the board will be nominated by the NALC Bishop and Executive Council and elected by the NALC Convocation.

9. Why locate the Seminary Center and Houses of Studies at existing theological schools? Wouldn't it be cheaper to locate them in NALC congregations?

The existing seminaries will be the degree-granting institutions, on behalf of the NALC. This is preferable, since we desire to have our seminarians receive degrees from accredited institutions and we will not be establishing a separate new institution. This also provides complete theological libraries and resources for our students at the existing institutions, making use of available classroom space and existing electronic infrastructure, including platforms for online and distance learning, and in some circumstances, campus housing. It will be much more cost-effective to partner with existing schools, rather than establish a new, stand-alone seminary, even one located within an existing congregation. It also allows us to use existing seminary faculties of the partner schools, allowing us to have fewer faculty on each campus. This means our NALC Seminary can be sustained at much less cost, ensuring its continuation while many seminaries in North America are facing financial crises.

10. How will Houses of Studies be developed and managed?

The goal is for the creation of Houses of Studies to take place cooperatively between the NALC Executive Council, the seminary board and the local and regional Mission Districts as need arises and financial resources are available. When it is determined that a House of Studies is needed in a particular location, the NALC Seminary director, board and local support committee will work together to develop a plan, provide funding from NALC and local and regional Mission Districts, congregations and individuals, and establish a partnership agreement with an existing theological school. While the NALC may provide start-up and interim funding for a specified time period, the new House of Studies will be expected to become self-supporting from tuition and donations from local and regional Mission Districts, congregations and individuals. Houses of Studies will be under the supervision of the NALC Seminary Board and Executive Council, but with their own advisory boards or support committees.

11. What about areas where there may not be enough financial support to create a House of Studies?

For the short term, students will be encouraged to attend the Seminary Center for theological education. When that is not possible, the student may take classes at an existing non-NALC seminary, with the approval and guidance of the NALC Candidacy Committee. However, the NALC Executive Council may choose to create a House of Studies for the sake of mission and availability to all NALC congregations

and seminarians. Funding would then come from the NALC Theological Education Fund and the NALC budget, with the understanding that this would be for a limited time period, until local and regional Mission Districts can financially support the House of Studies fully. It should be noted that one House of Studies may be supported by a number of Mission Districts, creating a broader base of financial support. For example, a House of Studies in Los Angeles or Phoenix might be supported by all Mission Districts comprised of western states in the U.S. A Canadian House of Studies in Edmonton might be supported by all Canadian Mission Districts.

12. How will the NALC Seminary, the Seminary Center and the Houses of Studies be supported financially?

The NALC Seminary in all its parts will be one entity, wholly owned by the NALC. There will be one budget for the seminary, with separate sections for the Seminary, the Seminary Center and each House of Studies. However, the NALC Executive Council and Convocation will approve the budget of the NALC Seminary in all its parts, providing necessary continuity and oversight. Donations to the NALC Theological Education Fund will benefit the entire theological education program of the NALC, although donations may be earmarked for a particular House of Studies.

13. The second recommendation approves the expenditure of \$1 million to fund the NALC Seminary for the first 16 months. Where will this money come from?

The Executive Council and the NALC are committed to establishing our own theological education system. Much discussion among the Executive Council took place regarding funding for the NALC Seminary. Finally, it was decided by the Executive Council to be bold, stepping out in faith to lay a solid foundation for our seminary from the beginning. The Executive Council, Bishop Bradosky, Bishop Emeritus Spring, and staff are committed to developing a plan for raising this amount of money as quickly as possible, doing everything necessary to reach this goal. They share the belief that the congregations, pastors and members of the NALC are ready to step up powerfully to support this exciting, innovative program for NALC theological education. Initially, major donors will be asked to consider making a significant gift to the NALC Theological Education Fund. Together with gifts from congregations, pastors and individuals, the highest priority will be to fund the program at this level to be able to move forward in faith. It is our hope that NALC folks now are ready to give generously to support the new NALC Seminary!

14. What is the timing of the NALC Seminary? If approved, when will it begin to function as our seminary?

If the Executive Council recommendation is approved by the NALC Convocation in August 2013, the next action of the council will be to call an NALC Seminary Director. This person will serve both as administrator of the Seminary and the Seminary Center, as well as being a faculty member at the Seminary Center. The director will begin work as soon as possible, coordinating with Trinity School for Ministry, creating office spaces, working with the NALC Candidacy Committee and Executive Council to finalize the curriculum, and developing registration processes and procedures. While the director may accept some limited teaching responsibilities at TSM as needed in autumn 2013, it is expected that the NALC Seminary program will begin operation in 2014.

15. Isn't a House of Studies already in place at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary?

In response to immediate need for NALC students to move from the ELCA Southern Seminary, the Carolinas Mission District secured funding from a donor to establish a Department of Lutheran Studies at Gordon-Conwell's Charlotte, NC, campus. With NALC Executive Council approval, a specialized call was issued to the Rev. Dr. Mary Havens to be the director of the department, with Dr. David Yeago and the Rev. Dr. Amy Schiffrin as adjunct faculty. It is hoped that, with the approval of the NALC Seminary proposal, this will become the NALC's first House of Studies.

16. Are there other important aspects of this proposal that should be mentioned?

Probably the most exciting is the intention to integrate a global component to the NALC Seminary. While much remains to be developed in this regard, the intention is to share online and distance learning capabilities with our international partners so that NALC students may participate in classes offered, for example, at the Mekane Yesus Seminary in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. Likewise, Mekane Yesus Seminary students would be able to take classes from our faculty at the Seminary Center or Houses of Studies. We would like our seminarians to have the opportunity to learn from Lutheran professors in other countries, although they may not be able to pack up family for a semester to move to Ethiopia or Tanzania. We plan to take full advantage of the technology currently available to make this possible and viable for the NALC Seminary as we move forward.

It is also important to point out that one important aspect of this Seminary proposal relates to the theological education not only of future pastors, but of lay leaders and congregational members. Rather than have one seminary location close to some few congregations—but far distant from most—the NALC Seminary proposal will, in time, provide NALC Houses of Studies nearer to most, if not all, NALC Mission Districts and congregations. This means quality NALC theologians will be available for Mission District gatherings, congregational activities, and lay schools of theology—providing many different opportunities for in-depth, faithful theological teaching and learning regionally, if not locally. This will assist us powerfully as we seek to make disciples of all nations and peoples, teaching them to observe all that our Lord has commanded us, as He instructs us in the Great Commission.

17. What should we do now?

First, please become familiar with the Executive Council recommendation included in these pre-Convocation materials. Discuss this recommendation and plan within your congregation and especially with those who will be voting at the NALC Convocation, August 8-9, 2013, in Pittsburgh. If you have questions, please feel free to send them to Pastor David Wendel, Assistant to the Bishop for Ministry and Ecumenism (dwendel@thenalc.org) or Pastor Roy Harrisville III, Theological Education Task Force chair (pastor@newlifeluth.org). They will attempt to answer your questions or point you in the right direction. Please make sure those who will be voting at the Convocation are aware of this recommendation, have seen the related materials, and come prepared to vote on this important recommendation.

Then, begin to think of ways you, your congregation and your Mission District can support theological education in the NALC! We will need financial contributions to the NALC Theological Education Fund to support the creation of the NALC Seminary, Seminary Center and Houses of Studies as they are developed. If you are a member or friend of the NALC who has been significantly blessed financially,

please begin prayerfully considering making a major gift to help kick off the fundraising. Pastors and congregational leaders are asked to identify and ask possible major donors to join us in this effort. Church councils are asked to consider ways that their congregation may fully and faithfully support the establishment of our seminary. Mission Districts are asked to develop programs and initiatives that will assist in fundraising within their territory and congregations. Above all, pray for this effort and for the guidance of the Holy Spirit as we seek to develop a theological education system in the NALC that is flexible, integrative, faithful to our NALC commitments and understandings, yet poised to serve us well as a Church in the 21st century!

July 12, 2013