

## NALC women offer theological training for women in Malawi

*By Pastor Cathi Braasch  
Pastor Pam Thorson  
and Mrs. Mari Dew*

What a privilege it is to serve the church! In January, a team of three theologians traveled to Malawi, the “warm heart of Africa,” for two weeks to train about 120 women of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Malawi (ELCM).

The team consisted of Pastor Cathi Braasch, Pastor Pam Thorson, and Mrs. Mari Dew. ELCM Bishop Joseph Paul Bvumbwe, in agreement with NALC Bishop John Bradosky, invited NALC women theologians to come and train Christian women leaders in the doctrines of the faith from an orthodox Lutheran perspective.

Because ELCM does not have enough pastors to preach and teach in all of its congregations, lay people, including women, provide preaching and teaching. The ELCM does not ordain women, but church leaders have expressed desire to begin that process.

Awakening Lives to World Mission (ALWM) made all the arrangements for the training event. While ALWM has sent mission teams to Malawi in the past, this is the first team from the NALC to work with the ELCM. Thank you, ALWM, for arranging an amazing mission.



*Participants at the conference in Blantyre show off their new Bibles*

We had a tremendous time with our Lutheran sisters and brothers in Malawi. Our host for the two weeks was the Rev. Feston Phiri, the Executive Director of Education for the ELCM, who accompanied us, serving as director, guide and interpreter.

We traveled from Lilongwe in the central part of Malawi to the Mzuzu Deanery in the north with our driver Derrick, John Phiri, the DAAA (Financial

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Officer), Rev. Phiri, and Agness Ndalama, women's coordinator for the ELCM.

We were well cared for, being treated as honored guests and welcomed as friends. Our new friends helped us learn some phrases in Chichewa, the nationally common language. Rev. Phiri's wife, Lydia, accompanied us the second half of the journey and so we were able to meet most of their family.

After a long drive to the Mzuzu Deanery, we were met by a tremendous group of women singing and dancing their welcome. Even though we were tired, their joy and enthusiasm were energizing. The Rev. Dean Chimwaye and his wife, Amai Dean (which means "wife of the dean") Martha, welcomed us to their home. They apologized for having no electricity, but candles sufficed, and their hospitality was most welcomed.

We became accustomed to the regular, but random, power and water shutdowns. The next week our reception was similar in the Blantyre Deanery where we were hosted by the Rev. Dean Pearson Banda and Amai Dean Olipa. We made good friends and colleagues throughout our trip.

On our first Sunday in Malawi, we attended worship at the Deanery Parish church in Mzuzu. Pastor Cathi preached according to the Old Testament lesson assigned by the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Tanzania, as appointed in the Revised



***A study group enjoying their discussion***

Common Lectionary. The worship was similar to our own liturgical sense.

The next Sunday we attended the cathedral church in Lilongwe, and Pastor Pam preached. It was a service of Holy Communion, which is celebrated once a month. They observe a great reverence which is sometimes lacking in our American congregations. Their many lively choirs add a truly African dimension unlike most of our own Lutheran services. Rev. Phiri explained that they use the choirs as part of their evangelism efforts, inviting young people to join a choir. This has proven to be a successful means of church growth. It is true that Africans love to sing and dance.

The conference in Mzuzu had 57 women from the three northern Deaneries. At our second conference, in southern Blantyre Deanery, 52 women participated from three Deaneries. Had we more time, we may have been able to teach other women in the central three Deaneries.

These are all spiritually mature Christian women, most of whom are in leadership in local parishes or on the staff of the Deaneries. The group included Bible study leaders, teachers, prominent women in their communities, and also young women.

At each conference, we began by giving out Bibles in the tribal languages, with most receiving one in Chichewa. These were met with great excitement since most did not have a Bible and the ones we



***A church choir at the worship service in Mzuzu***

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did see were torn and worn. We give thanks to our donor who gave a special memorial gift.

Our task was to provide solid, orthodox Lutheran, in-depth teaching on the basic doctrines of the faith and to encourage women in leadership. Topics included the Trinity, the Sacraments, the Ten Commandments, God's amazing grace, obstacles in our lives to receiving God's grace, prayer, Christian marriage, women in Scripture, and the gifts of the Holy Spirit. The women were thoroughly engaged in every session, taking notes and looking up every Bible reference. In the beginning, they were hesitant to ask questions, but they began to warm up as we made some connections to our own personal lives.

We had to learn "African time," allowing for a more extended time in discussion than our normal western expectations. The women were proud to share their discussion summaries with the larger group and were encouraging of one another. Songs are used to teach Bible stories and basic doctrine, with purposeful dance movements added to illustrate the words of the song. Their favorite song told the story of Nicodemus and the need to be born again in Jesus. One exercise was to create a song about a Bible story. Everyone enjoyed the exercise and the results.

Cathi led a time of braiding prayer necklaces as a reminder of their conferences. Each member of the team contributed equally with their own gifts and understanding. This kind of teamwork makes for a good mix of teaching methods to suit different learning styles and personalities.

Women of the Bible were featured, but not exclusively. They were pleased to have women teach them in a balanced way that honored family and home, as well as leadership. We modeled different styles of Bible study so they could learn to lead in their own context with more confidence and expertise.

It was especially wonderful to have a number of young mothers with their babies and toddlers at the



*Women at the conference in Mzuzu with their new Bibles*

conference in Blantyre. They take their babies everywhere with them. We asked how they tied them to their backs and with delight they showed us by personal demonstration. They use a chintenje, a piece of colorful cloth wrapped around like a skirt or around their backs, to tie the baby around them so they can work. A chintenje was given to each of us at the end of each conference. The women were excited to wrap us in them and show them off.

ELCM leadership expressed great satisfaction with our training, style, approach, and content. They trusted us to teach whatever we could. We sought to teach, but not to lead them. The ELCM will decide what to do with anything we taught. They have been accustomed to other church bodies coming in with directions and expectations. Our team simply set out to teach sound, biblical and Lutheran teaching.

The ELCM is orthodox in theology and practice, which would make for a good partner in ministry with the NALC. We all share hope for more training opportunities and relationship in the future.

As a team, we were blessed and humbled. Malawi is a poor country, but the people are warm hearted and kind. We leave part of our hearts with our friends in Africa, even as we take much of Africa with us.

God provided for every need, leaving no gaps in covering expenses. We have much to learn from our African partners, recognizing that we can give out of what we have been given in sound teaching. God is so good.

# Registration open for NALC Convocation and other events of 2018 Lutheran Week

Registration is now open for the 2018 NALC Convocation and other events of Lutheran Week Aug. 13-17 at the Crowne Plaza Denver Airport Convention Center in Denver, Colo.

The NALC Mission Festival and Convocation will gather Aug. 15-17 around the theme “The Holy Spirit: Calling, Gathering, Enlightening, Sanctifying.” Featured speakers for the Convocation are Sherry Weddell, author of *Forming Intentional Disciples*, and Katherine Coolidge of the Catherine of Siena Institute.

The Convocation begins with the annual Mission Festival and Mission District meetings on Wednesday afternoon and evening. Registration for the Convocation and Mission Festival is \$200 and includes three meals.

Events preceding the Convocation are the Braaten-Benne Lectures in Theology (Aug. 14-15), the Women of the NALC Annual Gathering (Aug. 14), the Ventures in Youth Ministry Symposium (Aug. 13-14) and Discipleship Coaching (Aug. 14).

You may register for the Convocation and any of the other events of Lutheran Week on the NALC website at [www.thenalc.org](http://www.thenalc.org). Hotel reservations may be made through a link on the NALC’s website.

## Financial Assistance Grants

Financial assistance grants are available to assist congregations in sending a lay delegate to the 2018 NALC Convocation.

The \$500 grants were approved by the NALC Executive Council in response to a request by the 2017 NALC Convocation to provide assistance to congregations that might not be able to afford to send delegates to the Convocation.

Congregations may seek this assistance by contacting their Mission District Dean. Recipients of the grants will be selected from requests received by the July 1 deadline.



CALLING



GATHERING



ENLIGHTENING



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2018 NALC LUTHERAN WEEK

## Braaten-Benne Lectures in Theology

“The Person of the Holy Spirit” is the theme of the Braaten-Benne Lectures in Theology on Tuesday afternoon and Wednesday morning.

Speakers for this year’s lectures are Dr. Matthew Burdette, curate of the Episcopal Church of the Good Shepherd in Dallas, Texas; Dr. Maurice Lee of Prince of Peace Lutheran Church in Santa Barbara, Calif.; Dr. Mark Mattes of Grand View University in Des Moines, Iowa; Dr. Orrey McFarland of Grace Lutheran Church in Thornville, Ohio; and Dr. Kathryn Schifferdecker of Luther Seminary in St. Paul, Minn.

Registration fee for the theological lectures is \$125 and includes lunch on Wednesday.

## Women of the NALC Annual Gathering

“God is Our Refuge and Strength” is the theme of the Women of the NALC Annual Gathering on Tuesday, Aug. 14, from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. The featured speaker is Pastor Pamela Thorson of House of Prayer Lutheran Church in Elizabethtown, Ky., and Dean of the Heartland Mission District. The \$80 registration fee includes lunch.



# Person of the Holy Spirit is topic of Braaten-Benne Lectures in Theology

“The Person of the Holy Spirit” is the topic for the 2018 Carl E. Braaten and Robert D. Benne Lectures in Theology. The annual theological conference, held prior to the NALC Convocation, is Aug. 14-15 at the Crowne Plaza Denver Airport Convention Center in Denver, Colo.

Speakers for this year’s lectures are Dr. Matthew Burdette, Dr. Maurice Lee, Dr. Mark Mattes, Dr. Orrey McFarland, and Dr. Kathryn Schifferdecker.



*Matthew Burdette*



*Maurice Lee*



*Mark Mattes*

Registration fee for the theological lectures is \$125 and includes lunch on Wednesday.

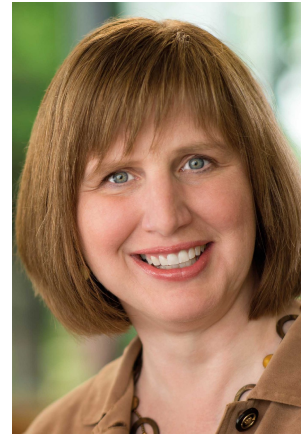
The Rev. Dr. Matthew Burdette will address theologian Robert Jenson’s contributions to the doctrine of the Holy Spirit. Dr. Burdette is a priest at Episcopal Church of the Good Shepherd in Dallas, Texas, and leads the Pleasant Grove Episcopal Renewal Project. Dr. Burdette is an associate director of the Center for Catholic and Evangelical Theology. He received his Ph.D. from the University of Aberdeen, having researched the political eschatologies of Robert W. Jenson and James H. Cone.

The Rev. Dr. Maurice Lee will address the *Filioque* question — the 1,200-year-old disagreement between Eastern and Western Christians over the addition to the Nicene Creed that the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Son, as well as the Father. Dr. Lee is pastor of Prince of Peace Lutheran Church in Santa Barbara, Calif. He earned a Ph.D. from Yale University, M.A. from Fuller Theological Seminary, M.S. from California Institute of Technology, and B.S. from Wheaton College.

The Rev. Dr. Mark Mattes will address the Holy Spirit in Martin Luther’s Catechisms. Dr. Mattes is Professor of Theology and Philosophy at Grand View University in Des Moines, Iowa. He holds a Ph.D. from the University of Chicago, an M.Div. from Luther Seminary, and a B.A. from St. Olaf College. Dr. Mattes has authored several books, including *Luther’s Theology of Beauty: A Reappraisal* and *The Role of Justification in Contemporary Theology*.



*Orrey McFarland*



*Kathryn Schifferdecker*

The Rev. Dr. Orrey McFarland will address the Holy Spirit in the New Testament. Dr. McFarland is pastor of Grace Lutheran Church in Thornville, Ohio. He has a Ph.D. and master’s degrees from Durham University in Durham, England. He is the author of *God and Grace in Philo and Paul*.

The Rev. Dr. Kathryn Schifferdecker will address the Holy Spirit in the Old Testament. She is Associate Professor of Old Testament at Luther Seminary in St. Paul, Minn. She holds a Th.D. from Harvard University, an M.Div. from Yale University, and a B.A. from St. Olaf College. She is the author of *Out of the Whirlwind: Creation Theology in the Book of Job*.

# Stuff the Tonka truck for NALC Disaster Response

*Bring gift cards to Lutheran Week to help disaster victims*



The Women of the NALC will again “stuff the truck” for NALC Disaster Response during Lutheran Week Aug. 13-17 in Denver, Colo. However, this year the “stuff the truck” event will feature a Tonka toy truck. Instead of bringing household goods (like last year), we will stuff gift cards into a Tonka toy truck.

When purchasing gift cards, please consider chain stores that are in many places across North America, such as Home Depot, Lowe’s, Target or Walmart. Gift cards can be in any amount.

Please bring the gift cards to the Women of the NALC Annual Gathering on Tuesday, Aug. 14, or to the Women of the NALC table in the ministry display area during the rest of Lutheran Week.

If you can’t be at Lutheran Week in Denver, but you would still like to be involved in the project, please send gift cards to: NALC Disaster Response; 810 Main Street; Caldwell, OH 43724.

## The Academy: Ministry and Relationships

The NALC is committed to the renewal of all our congregations, working to develop and deliver resources that challenge and open the NALC to the work of the Holy Spirit in our ministry and mission.

Each month The Academy, an online learning effort sponsored by the NALC’s Missions Team, features a free webinar based on expressed needs by NALC leaders, for NALC leaders.

“Ministry and Relationships” is the featured webinar for July. Building relationships is a key component to ministry.

Whether through formal visitation, getting to know your neighbors, or being involved in a plethora of other programs and ministries, relationships are key to renewal and revival.

After all, you can’t have life-to-life discipleship without relationships! Taking the time to build relationships inside and outside your congregation also helps to promote health and ward off potential miscommunications and unnecessary conflict. While it sounds like common sense, today’s busy schedules and the constant tug of cultural challenges can make it easy for the “urgent” to crowd out the “important.” Relationships take time and work.

This month’s session of The Academy addresses a host of questions and challenges articulated by our leaders.

Please join us at 11 a.m. ET on Tuesday, July 3. For more information on The Academy go to [missions.nalcnetwork.com/tag/academy](https://missions.nalcnetwork.com/tag/academy).



# Dangers of discipleship

Dear Disciples of Jesus,

Through these years you have become distinctly aware of my unwavering commitment to discipleship. However, I must also offer some words of caution regarding the dangers of discipleship.

I have listened to people define discipleship as “a way to perfect my faith, improve my character, get closer to Jesus, make our congregation stronger, help us to grow again, form leaders, change the culture of our congregation.” Certainly, that doesn’t seem dangerous.

In order to pursue discipleship, we enhance our devotional life, memorize Scripture, pursue spiritual disciplines, engage in Bible study, worship weekly, receive the Sacraments, pray the daily offices, confess our sins, seek forgiveness, meet regularly with a coach, mentor, spiritual director, shepherd or confessor, gather with others in dyads or triads for support and mutual accountability. These behaviors seem far more helpful than dangerous.

The danger is that discipleship can become all about me and my progress and my performance or about us and our congregation’s progress and performance. We can become so caught up in ourselves that we are no longer following Jesus, but our own image of what it means to be his disciple. We try to make ourselves better, thinking that if we simply engage in a growing list of positive behaviors we will become Christ-like, worthy to be called a disciple and fully equipped to disciple others.

As a congregation, we assume that if everybody did the same thing in the same way pursuing discipleship, our congregation would grow closer to Jesus and to one another, transforming our culture and the lives of countless others.

When we focus just on ourselves or our congregation, discipleship can become a form of legalism that forces us to keep trying harder and harder to get it right, or to realize that attaining some sort of advanced spiritual standing through our own efforts is never going to happen and so we give up.



*From the Bishop*

**Bishop John Bradosky**

There is also a danger of forming an inner group of “true disciples” while the rest of the congregation is on the outside. One group is doing it and the others aren’t even trying. When one group claims to be spiritually superior, faithful and growing closer to Jesus, they can become divisive and undermine the unity of the Church.

It is just as dangerous to assume that discipleship is a formula for equipping a congregation to climb “a spiritual ladder of corporate success.” The danger is that when discipleship is pursued in this way it becomes a trap or a prison of a completely inward focus. Focusing on ourselves or the survival of our congregation in ways that satisfy our fragile egos will also undermine our spiritual growth and development.

If we are honest, instead of being motivated and driven by faith in the grace of Jesus Christ, our commitment to gaining the attention of God and others by our own good works is never far behind.

While I may not acknowledge it theologically, there is a dichotomy between my mind and my heart regarding my faith. I know what I say I believe and then I also know what drives my action. Dallas Willard reminded me that there is the truth we ascribe to and the truth we actually hold to. When I am focused on me or us and our failures, my view of God can easily be twisted into what Dallas describes as “the western exterminator” or the “divine curmudgeon.” God is viewed as cold, distant, impersonal, judgmental, condemning, always setting unrealistic expectations that no person can meet. We want God, but we still want to control our life and destiny.

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However, the grace of Jesus Christ is beyond our ability to control and is more difficult to receive than we often admit. This takes many forms. We seek control in the precision of our theology, the passion for doctrinal purity or the commitment to a singular liturgical form. So, in the name of “discipleship,” we’ve tried to get people to do better or try harder or simply agree with our own feeble attempts to control our own lives.

In the Kingdom of Heaven Jesus came to proclaim, there is no room for the personal or corporate focus on me or us. Jesus both teaches and demonstrates that real freedom is the loss of self-focus, giving up self-centeredness, engaging in self-denial, taking up the cross. There is greater life when we are not focused on me or us. Focusing on ourselves at the expense of others is the polar opposite of the Kingdom of Heaven Jesus proclaimed. If we are only focused on ourselves, we reflect more of our surrounding culture than the values of the culture Jesus proclaimed in his kingdom. By constantly checking in on how well we’re doing at being “good Christians” we actually never become good Christians.

The discipleship Jesus both modeled and taught his disciples is outward focused and highly relational. It is founded and focused on God’s love. In the words of John 3:16, “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have everlasting life.”

In the kingdom Jesus proclaimed, God is not distant. There is no climbing to reach him. He has come down to us. Jesus is Immanuel — God with us. His presence is no more powerfully experienced than in the Eucharist. In his death on the cross he offered himself for your forgiveness and mine, for our redemption and salvation. He died the death we deserved so that we might be forgiven, reconciled to the Father through the Son’s selfless love and unfathomable grace. In his glorious resurrection we receive hope and new life now, and eternal life with him forever. We enter his kingdom through faith in him, in his love and in all of his promises. In your baptism he declared, “you are mine, you’ve been adopted, you are my child and an heir of my kingdom.”

We come not by our own strength or merit, but in our weakness and complete dependence on Jesus. Transformation begins to happen when we realize that our own efforts are never going to get us there and we surrender to what Jesus has already done for us. The discipleship Jesus taught was not a matter of arriving but abiding in his love for you individually and in his body, the Church. Jesus invited his first followers, and invites us, to abide in the full awareness of who he is, the nature of his Father and his kingdom.

Dallas Willard defined discipleship this way: “I am learning from Jesus how to live my life the way he would live it if he were I.” If Jesus could come to earth in the life of an ordinary person, born of humble parents, and live in a community that had such a reputation people would say, “Can anything good come out of Nazareth?”, he can certainly enter into the life of a person like you or me! Being a disciple of Jesus is living a life immersed in his amazing and wondrous love for us. It is not a matter of simply possessing knowledge about Jesus but knowing him as you would know an intimate friend. This loving, personal, intimate Savior longs to be involved in every aspect of our lives. This is the nature of Immanuel — God with us. The closeness Jesus had with his Father, he bestowed on others. Discipleship is discovering how close, available and accessible Jesus is, how willing he is to accompany you in every step of your journey in this life, how he longs for you to experience the abundant life only truly possible in following him, guided by his Holy Spirit. Being a disciple of Jesus cannot happen without such divine intervention.

Let me offer these 12 suggestions for avoiding an inward-focused discipleship:

1. Incorporate the language of love in all of our teaching about discipleship.
2. Encourage spiritual disciplines that don’t turn us in on ourselves but push us outward into loving others.
3. Stop talking about growing closer to Jesus as an end of discipleship. Realizing how close he already is changes everything.

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4. Encourage Bible study out of learning more about the nature of God who loved us beyond what we could ever imagine or deserve. We read not to earn a gift but because of a gift we have already received.

5. The transformation in discipleship is to love others the same way Christ has loved us.

6. Focus those we disciple on loving others, turning our understanding into action, putting the best interest of the other ahead of self.

7. Accountability cannot be just about quiet time, prayer time, memorization or study without also including how we are implementing what we have learned in how we are loving others (the nature of Christian living).

8. Create this community and accountability in every congregation, beginning with every relationship we have now.

9. Be open to being interrupted by the Holy Spirit to attend to the needs of those closest to you.

10. Be prepared to tell God's story of his amazing grace in Jesus Christ.

11. Make discipleship as concrete and practical as Jesus did. "Give them something to eat."

12. Be sure to intentionally make the connection between how Christ is speaking to you through his Word and how you are responding obediently in loving others.

I have mentioned a number of the dangers of discipleship, but the greatest danger of all is to do nothing about discipleship. To make that choice is to live in direct disobedience to Jesus' command to "Go and make disciples of all nations" (*Matthew 28*). The greatest danger for the entire Body of Christ is to know what Jesus taught and modeled and then refuse to act. This is to live self-centered lives, relying on our own wisdom and attempts at self-justification but not his grace no matter how many times we utter the word.

Having served the Church as a pastor for the past 40 years, I am well aware that every congregation has been accused and convicted of having an inner group that causes others to feel like outsiders. Who is closest to the pastor or the council? That is the inner group because people believe they are the ones who possess power and authority. It could be the choir, worship and music committee, executive council, small group, or any number of other groups depending on the nature of the congregation's history. Trying to prevent division by avoiding discipleship is a flimsy excuse. Jesus teaches about this very issue when the mother of James and John came to Jesus with her request that her sons would sit on the right and left side of his throne in Heaven. Jesus refocused their lives on serving and loving others for the sake of his kingdom and so must we, for that is the true nature of discipleship.

The greatest danger of all is doing nothing about discipleship.

With you following him,

Bishop John Bradosky



### **Youth and Family Ministry**

Registration numbers for the Ventures in Youth Ministry Symposium are up over the numbers from this time last year. To register, go to [thenalc.org](http://thenalc.org).

Youth and Family Ministry in the NALC is taking big steps forward and the symposium is quickly becoming our anchor event. Consider sending someone from your congregation to get more connected with the NALC.

Our keynote speaker this year is Thomas O'Neill, a philanthropist at Second Harvest Food Bank and former president of Youth Encounter. Involved in ministry to young people for much of his life, Thomas will be addressing how to build a ministry to young people through building service projects and building relationships.

# Congo Mission International

*Building bridges between Lutherans in North America and Congo*

When Pastor Stéphane Kalonji responded to Bishop Masuangi Keya's call to travel to the Democratic Republic of Congo and train pastors, seminarians, lay men and women, and youth leaders, he thought it would be a one-time engagement. However, that has not been the case. This mission work has been going and growing for seven years.

In 2015, Pastor David Nuottila felt called by God to go to the DRC with Pastor Kalonji for the annual three-week trip. Both pastors now lead Congo Mission International, in addition to serving congregations in the United States — Pastor Kalonji at St. Paul Lutheran Church in Rosenberg, Texas,



*Pastor David Nuottila and Pastor Stéphane Kalonji with Bibles for pastors and lay leaders.*



*Pastor David Nuottila and Pastor Stéphane Kalonji pose with women following a workshop for women in Boma, Democratic Republic of the Congo.*

and Pastor Nuottila at St. Jacob's Lutheran Church in Chapin, S.C.

The Carolinas Mission District of the NALC, churches of the NALC and LCMC, as well as many individuals across the country, have made the annual mission trip and ongoing work between mission trips possible.

The work of Congo Mission International includes many components:

**Leadership Training:** Pastor Kalonji and Pastor Nuottila travel to Congo once a year and conduct workshops for pastors, seminarians, lay leaders, women's groups, and youth groups. They have covered topics such as *Church Planting*, *The Church in Mission*, *The Gospels*, *Forgiveness and Reconciliation*, and *Law and Gospel*.

**Meals for Orphaned Children:** While hunger is a widespread issue in the Democratic Republic of Congo, children who have lost their parents to the

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ongoing war in Congo are even more affected than the rest of the population because they truly have no source of support. The pastors work with the Lutheran Church in Congo to provide free, nutritious meals to these children.

**Bills for Congo Babies:** Mothers and their newborn babies are regularly detained in clinics throughout Congo because they lack the funds to pay the hospital bills. They are detained until they pay their bills or offer collateral. Because of the generosity of Christians in North America, Pastor Kalonji and Pastor Nuottila free many babies and mothers every year. In 2017, the oldest baby they freed had been detained for seven months after her birth.



*Workshop participants at Kasai Oriental*

**Farming Projects:** In 2015 a farming project was launched in the town of Boma, province of Bas-Congo, to produce food locally and feed orphaned children, and other children in need. Though this project still needs much funding to produce more and to be secured with a fence, it is going very well. A similar project is also desperately needed and contemplated for the Kasai Oriental province.

**Bibles for Pastors and Lay Leaders:** Pastor Kalonji and Pastor Nuottila are committed to raising awareness about the need for Bibles in Congo, where many pastors and lay leaders do not have a complete Bible. On their mission trips, they have locally purchased and distributed Bibles in French,



*Serving food to orphaned children in Boma*

Lingala, Tshiluba, Kikongo and Swahili. The average cost of a Bible is \$15.

Pastor Kalonji and Pastor Nuottila are seeking congregations, organizations and individuals interested in partnering with them in the Great Commission work they do in the Democratic Republic of Congo. Their next trip is scheduled for September.

You may learn more about their mission at [www.thenalc.org/congo-mission-international](http://www.thenalc.org/congo-mission-international).

You may contact Pastor Stéphane Kalonji at [kalonjist@aol.com](mailto:kalonjist@aol.com) or 252-876-5192. Pastor David Nuottila may be reached at [revdavidwn@gmail.com](mailto:revdavidwn@gmail.com) or 803-604-6227.



*Babies freed from a clinic in Kinshasa*



# Water Mission project answers prayers, bringing water to community in Kenya

*“Truly God has listened; he has attended to the voice of my prayer.” — Psalm 66:19*

God hears our prayers, and he often chooses to use us to answer the prayers of others — even on the opposite side of the world!

For 15 years, 85-year-old Dani Fileria waited through drought, sickness, and thirst, praying that God would one day bring safe water to her community. Finally, after years of waiting, Dani’s community of Ngulu, Kenya, is receiving safe water.

Implemented by Water Mission Kenya, this long-awaited water project will transform the lives of Ngulu’s 3,600 residents. Ngulu is located in western Kenya, where the dry season is significantly longer than the rainy season. During these annual droughts, the need for safe water is all the more evident. The safe water project was commissioned last April and is currently in the final follow-up stage.

During a recent follow-up visit, Water Mission staff met Dani at one of the community taps. She greeted them and asked if they were the God-sent people who gave her rest by providing water at her doorstep. Before the implementation of the water project, residents would collect water from a stream three kilometers away.

At the age of 70, Dani started to experience back pain, which she related to her old age. Her pain made accessing water more difficult than ever. From that point on, she prayed for a solution to the water problem. For 15 years, she pleaded, “God, don’t let me die before I see water in my community.”

“I came to celebrate what I thought I would go to the grave without my eyes beholding. I praised God with all the languages and ways I knew. He had not only answered my prayer but had given me more



*Dani Fileria prayed for water to come to her community of Ngulu, Kenya. She rejoiced when Water Mission helped make that happen.*

than I asked — water flowing from the tap at an affordable cost within my own community,” Dani said after the celebration of the arrival of water in her community.

Today, at the age of 85, Dani says confidently, “If I die now, it will be peaceful. I will sleep a grateful grandma. God has answered a prayer that I patiently waited on for 15 years. May he be always praised, for I have witnessed his faithfulness.”

We are so thankful for your support that makes stories like this possible. May God be praised for his overwhelming faithfulness.

Water Mission is an NALC Recognized Ministry. You may learn more about their work online at [watermission.org](http://watermission.org).





# Canadian Mission District Youth Gathering

**By Teresa Peters**

The annual NALC Canadian Mission District Youth Gathering took place May 18-21 at Camp Manitou, a summer camp and year-round outdoor recreation facility located five minutes outside of Winnipeg, Manitoba. The theme was “Rescued and Redeemed.”

Participants took part in a variety of events to learn how Christ is our rescuer and redeemer. Pastor Peter Lurvey of Joy Lutheran Church in Winnipeg, our keynote speaker, helped us gain a deeper understanding of Colossians 1:13-14, “He has delivered us from the domain of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved Son, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.” This was done through five large-group gatherings, “Of God,” “Of Original Sin,” “Of the Son of God,” “Of Justification,” and “Of New Obedience.”

The “Gathering Band” — Tom and Linda Lurvey, Steve and Anita Glockner, Dylan Grymonpre, Shanlyn Parkhill and Katherine Terra — led us in great music that got everyone on their feet singing, doing actions and truly worshipping.

This weekend was a chance to meet and team up with youth from other Lutheran churches and have a variety of different experiences to help us connect Word and Sacrament to our daily Christian lives. It was a chance to learn together and gain friendships.

For fun, participants could take part in rock climbing, zip lining, low ropes or even bubble ball. A great time was had by all.

It was also an opportunity to do mission work. The participants had four different options to choose from. One group went to Canadian Lutheran World Relief to learn about the work they do there and pack “We Care Kits.” Another group made baby quilts to be donated to Villa Rosa. The last two groups went to two different seniors homes to share their time with the residents. As we all know, mission is a vital part of the Christian life.

Sunday morning we had a beautiful worship service for the participants, as well as for the Winnipeg NALC congregations. Pastor Peter Lurvey and Pastor Bjoern Meinhardt presided, and Pastor Mac de Waal, Dean of the Canada Mission District, was our preacher. The “Gathering Band” provided the music. It was a wonderful service.

To keep costs down, we asked for help from St. Peter’s Evangelical Lutheran Church and Joy Lutheran Church, the NALC congregations in Winnipeg, and boy did they step up! They were active members in the planning committee. They helped with registration and led icebreaker games. They were part of the band and worked on IT. They provided transportation to and from the airport. They delivered people and supplies to and from the camp. They drove to mission sites, they helped create and sew baby blankets and they baked cookies. And one of the biggest volunteer jobs — they did all the cooking at the gathering.

A great big thank you to everyone involved! Everyone is looking forward to the next NALC Canadian Mission District Youth Gathering in May of 2019.

# Finding Jesus in Jerusalem

Writing this while visiting Jerusalem as ecumenical observers of the 2018 Global Anglican Future Conference, we had some time to visit the Old City, the Way of Sorrows of our Lord's procession from Pilate to the empty tomb, and other significant locations from the life, death and resurrection of our Lord and the early Church.

Along the way, we were blessed by our colleague, interpreter and "tour guide" for this trip, Pastor Bassam Abdallah, a retired NALC pastor, who was born in Jerusalem but served his entire ministry as a Lutheran pastor in the United States.

One interesting (and tragic) bit of information we learned from Pastor Bassam is that there is a disorder called "Jerusalem syndrome."

According to Wikipedia, "Jerusalem syndrome is a group of mental phenomena involving the presence of either religiously themed obsessive ideas, delusions or other psychosis-like experiences that are triggered by a visit to the city of Jerusalem."

While this takes place in a variety of ways for different persons, it seems to be manifested most commonly among Christians who come to Jerusalem expecting to find Jesus, expecting to have a transformative spiritual experience. Despite being overwhelmed amid the myriad significant historical places, churches and shrines, these persons are also disappointed that they do not "find" or "experience" Jesus as they had expected. They do not have the long-hoped-for, life-changing transformation they traveled so far to finally receive.

While I have always dreamed of that day when I would be able to visit Jerusalem and Israel, I had no unrealistic expectations. I did not anticipate my faith would be strengthened nor affected by the visit. Don't misunderstand me, I have been impressed and moved by walking where Jesus walked. Tears have come readily. There are places where silence is the only appropriate response — the Garden of Gethsemane, the place of Jesus' flogging and torture, the Church of the Holy Sepulcher — as we



## *Ministry Matters*

**Pastor David Wendel**

Assistant to the Bishop  
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ponder and pray about our Lord's passion and death, for us and for our salvation.

While visiting Jerusalem is a high point of my life, I did not come looking for Jesus in some unique or transformative way, nor did I expect to encounter the Risen Christ in Jerusalem.

A visit to the Holy Land can be interesting, renewing and powerful in bringing the accounts of Holy Scripture to life in a new and concrete manner. But you don't need to come to Israel to "find Jesus." Why?

Because the good news is that Jesus is no longer tied to Jerusalem or the Holy Land! Jesus is not holed up in the churches, shrines and streets of the Old City, waiting for us to come visit him if we have the time and money to make the pilgrimage.

The good news is that "the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth" (John 1:14). The good news is that our risen, ascended Lord is with us, in Word and Sacrament, where two or three are gathered in his name.

While God may be present where and when he wills, Martin Luther affirms again and again that for our sake, our Lord is present for us in the *means of grace*: the Word, written, read and preached, and broken and poured out for us in the Lord's Supper, specifically, mercifully, so that in the midst of pain, struggle, grief, loneliness and difficulty, we don't have to go looking for him. We don't have to

***Continued on Page 15***



attempt great spiritual journeys of heart, mind or body to discover Jesus in far-off, hard-to-reach places. Rather, God is with us wherever the Word is read and shared. Jesus is with us as we receive him in the foretaste of the feast to come, in Holy Communion. God is with us at prayer group, potluck, hospital or bedside, as two or three disciples gather together, in Christ's name.

As biblical, sacramental Christians, we take seriously Christ's real presence among us, where we are, where we live and move and interact — not in Jerusalem or Rome. Our worship is not focused on us and our ability to spiritually perceive and connect with an abstract, ethereal Lord present only for those spiritually attuned enough to experience him.

The good news is that Jesus comes to us, and his is an "objective" presence — he comes to us regardless of us. He comes to us even when we are so troubled or distracted in life that we fail to see him or know that he is with us. His presence is not an accomplishment or a destination for the hyper-faithful, but the gift of God for those of us who are not saintly, or sanctified or prepared. This is the good news.

And this relates to ministry in the NALC and in our congregations because we often fail to understand this ourselves or to share it with others. It may be that these "Jerusalem syndrome" Christians go looking for Jesus in Jerusalem because they do not grasp the miracle of the Incarnation — the good news of "God with us" in Word and Sacrament.

If we think of Jesus' presence as a spiritualized presence, then perceiving his presence often depends upon our persistence in seeking him and finding him. Most of the time, I am not so spiritually perceptive or sensitive. I am a Lutheran because we believe that God comes to us, that Jesus' presence depends, not upon me and my spiritual extra-sensory perception, but upon the Holy Spirit and the Word of God.

The more we lift that up in our congregations, celebrating God with us, incarnate, present objectively in the Word and the Sacraments, the more we may find the lonely, the sick, the lost —



***Pastor David Wendel, Bishop John Bradosky and Pastor Bassam Abdallah at the Church of the Holy Sepulcher in Jerusalem.***

yes, the sinner — joining us as we gather around Christ's real presence among us.

Let us have Word and Sacrament be the center of worship and of our life together as Christians, Lutherans and the NALC. Let us worship as if Christ is truly present — because he is! Let us commit ourselves to reading, studying, living in the Word, because the Word proclaims Jesus, crucified, risen and now present with us. Let us so conduct ourselves in our congregations, homes and families that we respect and reflect the very presence of our Lord Jesus, with us every moment of our lives — and with us until the close of the age. Let us share that real, true, objective presence with others, as we connect with visitors, neighbors, friends — life to life, one on one — in home and church and daily life, that Jesus may reach them, through us.





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