

Bishop Bradosky's Easter message

Dear disciples of Jesus, soon our greeting will be "Christ is risen! He is risen indeed!"

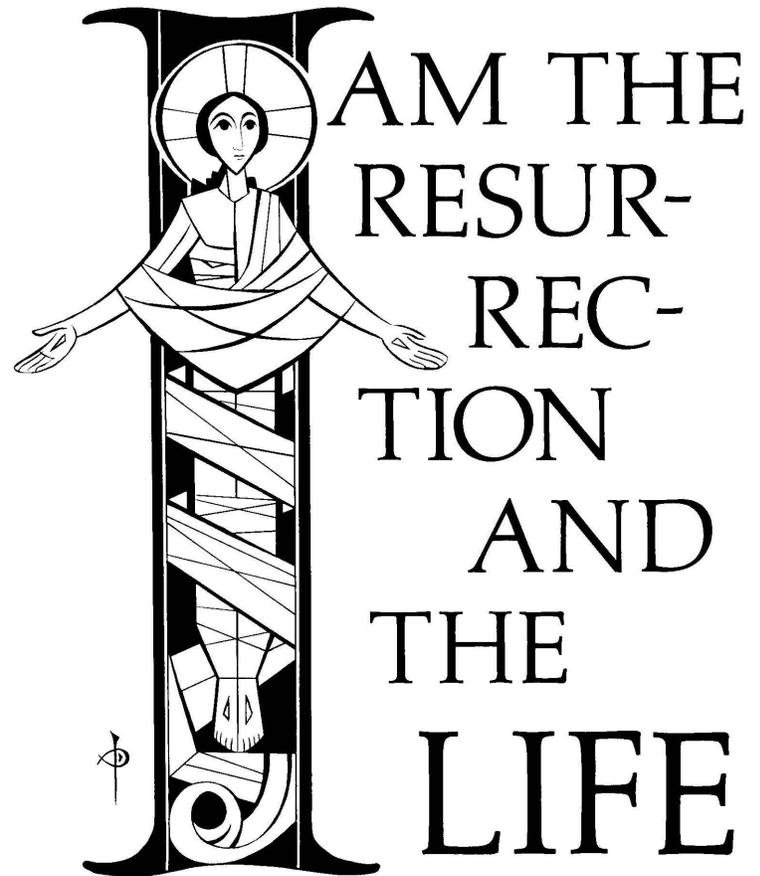
This Lenten season has been one filled with grief, dealing with terminally ill pastors, their families and treasured friends. Emotional exhaustion is far more profound than any physical exertion, far beyond running a marathon. In writing the most difficult funeral sermon of my ministry at the death of a dear friend of nearly 30 years, I was reminded and struggled with how easy it is to speak of the resurrection as "future hope," but not "current reality."

There are some who want to argue as to whether the resurrection of Jesus is "a myth" or an "historical event." Unfortunately, I have listened to Easter preaching that simply tries to prove that the Gospel accounts of the resurrection are historically accurate, believing that Christian apologetics, defending the faith, is sufficient to transform the lives of those who hear our well-reasoned thoughts.

Even worse is the proclamation of Easter's relevance as some distant future hope with implications only for the end of life, as if it is a "fire insurance policy."

We sing our "alleluias" because Jesus has solved the problem of our sin and guilt, and now nothing can keep us out of Heaven. We can focus on the practical nature of the resurrection that meets our needs or the supernatural and miraculous nature of the resurrection that seems to have little to do with our existence. Preaching in either direction is not helpful in the mission of making disciples.

I commend to you a third option, the resurrection of Jesus Christ as our current reality. Jesus expresses



that current reality in the profound "I am" statements in the Gospel of John. Jesus tells us that he is the bread of life that came down from heaven. He is the light of the world and whoever follows him will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life. He is the vine and we are the branches. He is the door to his kingdom, the Good Shepherd. He is the way, the truth and the life. In every way Jesus was teaching his disciples about his nature that not only entered the world but entered their lives, transforming their worldview, their identity and their existence.

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The most profound “I am” statement Jesus makes is in the context of the raising of Lazarus. You remember the story from the 11th chapter of John. Lazarus had died. Mary and Martha were grieving. Martha confronts Jesus, “Lord, if you had been here my brother would not have died.” Jesus responded, “Your brother will rise again.” Martha tells Jesus that she believes in the resurrection on the last day as a final and distant hope.

Notice that Jesus is not content to leave her with such an understanding, but proclaims to her, **“I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me, though he dies, yet shall he live and everyone who lives and believes in me shall never die.”**

Jesus even demands a response from Martha, “Do you believe this?” Martha responds with a profound confession of faith. “Yes, Lord; I believe that you are the Christ, the Son of God, who is coming into the world.”

In the same way that the Eucharist is not simply a memorial retelling a story about Jesus, but Jesus’ true presence in the bread and wine of Communion, so we must also confess that Easter is not simply the retelling of a story about Jesus, but that he is the resurrection. It is just as much current reality as it is promise and our future. Through faith in Jesus the same kind of eternal life that flows through him flows through us. Through faith in Jesus we are already living our eternal life because our life is in him.

In Athens, Paul bears witness to Christ as their “unknown God” who is not far away but a current reality. He is the one in whom “we live and move and have our being.” The eternal life of which Jesus speaks is not knowledge about God but an intimately interactive relationship with him. It is life in Jesus now!

Jesus’ words to his disciples to prepare them for his death and resurrection inform our Easter proclamation. Jesus said, “On that day you will realize that I am in my Father, and you are in me, and I am in you.”

In his commentary on John 14:20, Martin Luther writes,

We are in Christ and Christ is in us. The first truth points upward; the second points downward. We must first be in him with all our being — with our sin and weakness and even with death. We know that in God’s eyes we are freed, redeemed and saved from these things through Christ. Then we must swing above and beyond ourselves in Christ. Yes, we must be totally one with Christ and his people. ... Consequently, sin, death, the devil and our struggles with conscience disappear.

We can then say, “I am not sure about death or hell. If there is death, let it consume my Lord Christ first. If there is hell, let it devour my Savior. If sin, the law or my conscience condemns me, let it accuse the Son of God. If that happens, then let me be condemned, consumed and devoured with my Lord.”

But because the Father and Christ live, I also will live. Because Christ remains undefeated by sin and death, I also will remain undefeated. For I know that Christ is in the Father; therefore, I also am in Christ.

This is how we soar above and beyond ourselves to Christ. Christ comes down to us from above. If we are in Christ, then Christ is in us. We have received him and crept into him by faith. We have left sin, death and the devil behind. So, Jesus shows himself to us and says, “Go preach, comfort and baptize. Serve your neighbor. Be obedient and patient. I will be in you and I will do all this through you. Whatever you do will be accomplished by me. Be happy. Be bold and courageous. Remain in me, then I will certainly remain in you.”

This is the bold and profound Easter proclamation that Jesus is the eternal life and that life in him is our eternal existence. Easter is our current reality. That reality has everything to do with our daily life as his disciples.

Christ is risen!

He is risen indeed!

Bishop John Bradosky

Wisconsin church donates shower trailer to NALC Disaster Response

After Hurricane Irma made landfall, devastating thousands of homes in Florida and the East Coast, NALC volunteers offered to help.

Shepherd of the Woods Lutheran Church in Jacksonville, Fla., offered to house volunteers, and provide access to facilities with showers.

However, housing and showers became an issue in the southern part of Florida.

Pastors Bill and Rebecca Heber of Oasis Church in Lake Mary, Fla., shared that there might be an opportunity to get a shower trailer from Rebecca's brother's church in Wisconsin.

Pastor Chris Miller, Rebecca's brother, was the pastor of St. Peter's Lutheran Church (ELCA) in Loganville, Wis., when he and a church member had the idea to build a shower trailer in 2005 after



Mary Bates, NALC Disaster Response Coordinator, poses with the newly-painted NALC shower trailer donated by St. Peter's Lutheran Church in Loganville, Wis.

seeing a similar trailer while doing disaster relief work in Biloxi, Miss. They and a crew of 23 from their congregation were helping with Hurricane Katrina relief efforts. The trailer had extended service in New Orleans during Hurricane Katrina relief efforts and at five other disaster sites.

Mary Bates, NALC Disaster Response Coordinator, reached out to St. Peter's Lutheran Church in Loganville, Wis., and found the congregation to be very concerned about the impacted families in Florida and willing to donate their two-stall shower trailer to NALC Disaster Response.

NALC Disaster Response now has a shower trailer in Texas for Hurricane Harvey recovery which is currently parked at the South Texas Mission District warehouse at Peace Lutheran Church in Rosenberg, Texas, and a shower trailer for use on the East Coast.

God has blessed NALC Disaster Response with amazing volunteer teams and tremendous support to build our capacity to serve wherever and whenever disasters strike.



This shower trailer was built in 2006 by members of St. Peter's Lutheran Church in Loganville, Wis., for use in disaster response efforts in New Orleans, La., following Hurricane Katrina. It has been used at five additional disaster sites.

Nominations sought for positions to be elected at 2018 Convocation

The NALC Nominating Committee is receiving the names of candidates for nomination to serve in positions to be elected at the 2018 NALC Convocation Aug. 13-17 in Denver, Colo.

The Convocation will elect two members of the NALC Executive Council (one lay person and one pastor) and two members of the Court of Adjudication, all to four-year terms.

The Convocation will also elect three members to the North American Lutheran Seminary Board of Regents for six-year terms.

Both pastors and lay members may be elected to the Court of Adjudication and Board of Regents.

Brief descriptions of the duties of each position are available on the NALC website.

Congregations are encouraged to suggest individuals for any of the open positions. Please confirm that individuals are willing and able to serve

prior to submitting their names. Those who feel called to serve in any of these positions are asked to contact their pastor and congregational leaders to inform them of their openness to serving.

All candidate recommendations should be submitted by May 4. This will give the committee the time necessary to compile biographical information on the candidates and comply with the constitutional requirements to provide this information to NALC members.

To submit a name, please complete the Candidate Submission Form available on the NALC website and return it to the Nominating Committee.

Nominees will be asked to complete the Candidate Biographical Form (also available online) and to provide a photo for publication with the biographical information.

Questions may be addressed to the Nominating Committee at nominations@thenalc.org.

Registration open for NALC Convocation

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

The NALC Mission Festival and Convocation are Aug. 15-17. Registration fee is \$200.

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

You may register for the Convocation and any of the other events of Lutheran Week on the NALC website at www.thenalc.org. Hotel reservations may be made through a link on the NALC's website.



CALLING



GATHERING



ENLIGHTENING



SANCTIFYING

2018 NALC LUTHERAN WEEK

Canadian Rockies Theological Conference to feature Malcolm Guite and Steve Bell

“Truth, Beauty, and the ‘True Myth’ — Thinking with the Inklings and Beyond” is the theme of the 2018 Canadian Rockies Theological Conference April 10-13 in Canmore, Alberta.

The Rev. Dr. Malcolm Guite, Chaplain of Girton College of the University of Cambridge, England, is the featured speaker.

Dr. Guite will collaborate with musician Steve Bell throughout the conference and hold a joint concert on Thursday evening. Both were featured at the 2016 NALC Convocation.

The Inklings was an informal literary discussion group associated with the University of Oxford, England, in the 1930s and 1940s. Members included C.S. Lewis and J.R.R. Tolkien.

Conference organizers offer the following titles and descriptions of Dr. Guite’s presentations:

Tolkien, Lewis, and the True Myth. Malcolm revisits the momentous conversation between C.S. Lewis and J.R.R. Tolkien on Addison’s Walk, showing how it helped bring Lewis to faith and drawing out what it might mean for us in our own time.

Why Do We Hunger for Beauty? Malcolm will introduce the “Theology of Beauty” starting with Plato and moving on to Augustine, and then be in conversation with Steve about the Christian artist’s response to beauty in the world and in the making of their art. Steve and Malcolm will illustrate with occasional poems and songs.

Imaginative Apologetics: How beauty in art and myth can help us prepare the way for Christ. Malcolm will reflect on the importance of beauty in Lewis’ life and conversion, and lead a discussion of how we might prepare the way for Christ in our own life and work.

Behind the Inklings, Coleridge, Nature, and the Gospel. Drawing on his recent book, “Mariner: A Voyage with Samuel Taylor Coleridge,” Malcolm will



Steve Bell and Malcolm Guite

tell the story of how Coleridge (a huge influence on the Inklings) recovered his faith, in part by responding to beauty in nature.

In the Image of the Trinity: Christian Collaboration. A joint session with Malcolm and Steve. The Inklings all collaborated, set ego aside, critiqued, and contributed to one another’s work. In this session Malcolm and Steve will talk about how our understanding of God as Trinity, as a loving communion of persons each addressing and giving to the other, forms the foundation for all good human interaction. This will be illustrated by stories of their own collaboration and with songs and poems arising from it.

Panel discussion. Where do we take it from here? How can the example of the Inklings, and the songs and stories they have shared enable us to proclaim and share Christ and the Kingdom more widely?

Those who attend may receive Continuing Education Units from the North American Lutheran Seminary, a cosponsor of the event.

More information on the conference is available on the NALC website — www.thenalc.org.

Daniel Nelson, missionary to China

Remembering the Lutheran missionary and family killed in skyjacking

By Charlotte Martinson Gronseth

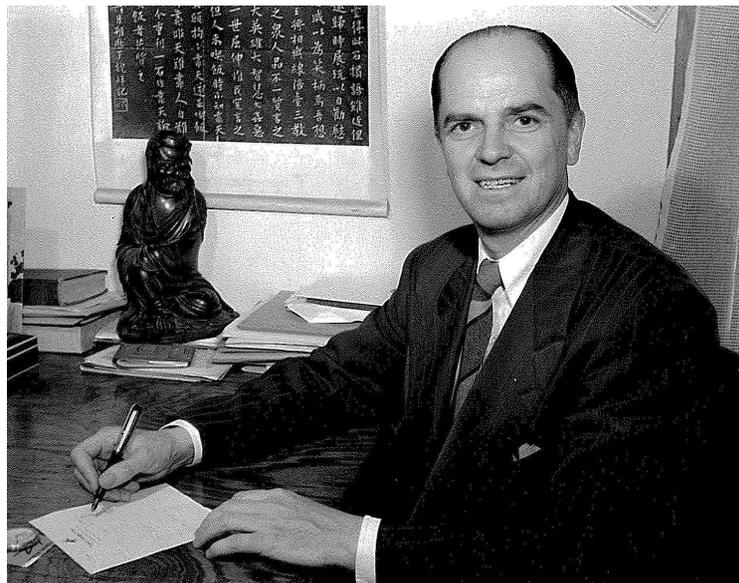
July 16, 2018, is the 70th anniversary of the world's first recorded skyjacking of a commercial airplane, the Miss Macao of the Cathay Pacific Airways. It is also the 70th anniversary of the death of a notable Lutheran missionary and his family who were passengers on that plane.

Daniel Nelson, Jr. was born in China on Aug. 18, 1902, in the city of Xinyang, in the poor rural province of Henan. His father, Daniel Nelson, Sr., and his mother, Anna, were serving as missionaries — America's first Lutheran missionaries in China. Growing up among the Chinese people, young Daniel came to love them and their culture.

On returning to the United States, he attended St. Olaf College in Northfield, Minn., graduating in 1924, and Luther Seminary in St. Paul. Soon after his ordination as pastor, Nelson married a college schoolmate, Esther Idso, and, in 1928, the two left for a lifetime of service in Henan, China. There, often under threat of bandit groups and civil unrest, he brought the Good News of God's love to many and helped train Chinese converts to become effective Christian leaders.

Returning to the U.S. for several years, he earned his Ph.D. in Hartford, Conn. (1943), and served for some time with United China Relief in New York. Relief was urgently needed, for the Japanese had invaded China in the late 1930s, penetrating deep into the country and bringing vast devastation. In 1943 he was chosen by the National Lutheran Council (the China arm of the Lutheran World Federation) to head up their work there. He accepted the challenge, and in 1944 became its director, a post he held until his death.

During these several years, based in Free China's western city of Chongqing, his duties were many-faceted. An early assignment was to provide relief to orphaned missions — European Lutheran agencies cut off by the war from their support in Germany and Scandinavia. He also opened a



Daniel Nelson Jr.

Lutheran Service Center for American military personnel, was instrumental in organizing a Chinese Lutheran congregation from among the millions of war refugees, and in opening a provisional theological school.

In 1946 — following World War II — the Roy Farrell Export Import Company was founded in Shanghai, which soon created Cathay Pacific Airways as its air transport wing. With offices opened in Hong Kong, Cathay Pacific Airways soon became a flourishing Hong Kong-registered business, ferrying both passengers and freight.

It was not long before the opportunity of ferrying imported gold to Macau became evident, involving transactions legal in Macau though not in Hong Kong. Such gold would be disseminated to Chiang Kai-shek (among others) to support his fight against the Communists in China. However, ferrying passengers and gold on the same flight was recognized as dangerous and therefore prohibited.

Daniel Nelson, ironically, had been a staunch advocate of the use of airplanes in mission work. During World War II he became deeply concerned

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for the nearly 300 missionaries and their families still in danger zones in China. From his base in Free China, he approached Major General Patrick Hurley, then U.S. ambassador to China. Hurley communicated with General A.C. Wedemeyer, who then ordered their air rescue: American transport planes bringing the missionaries first to West China, then lifting them high over the eastern Himalayan Mountains and the Burma jungles to Calcutta.

Following the war (1946), as missionary personnel streamed back into China, Nelson envisioned a plane owned by the mission itself to facilitate their movement. His dream became reality when he arranged the purchase of a DC-3 twin-engine transport from the U.S. Army, christening it the “St. Paul.” The plane served its purpose well.

Two years later (1948), as Communist forces advanced throughout China, the St. Paul became a critical factor in another major evacuation of missionaries. Making dozens of flights, it evacuated Protestant and Roman Catholic missionaries as well as 1,000 Korean Christians from territory threatened by the Communists. In June of that year, only weeks before Nelson’s own fatal flight, the plane had completed 30 trips. By then Nelson had been elected president of the newly established World Missionary Aviation Conference by the National Lutheran Council.

On July 16, 1948, Daniel Nelson and his family, after a visit to Macau, boarded the Miss Macao for their return to Hong Kong. Unknown to all, among those boarding the plane were three armed pirates. These secured seats directly behind the pilot — American Dale Cramer, a highly respected ex-US Navy pilot. He was substituting for the originally rostered pilot for this flight who had become ill.

The pirates’ plan had been to hold up the plane, force it to land somewhere remote and rob the passengers, four of whom were millionaires. These would then be held for ransom on a remote island by relatives of the pirates. Accordingly, seven or eight minutes after take-off they struck, demanding Cramer hand over the controls. He refused. Shots were fired and pandemonium broke loose, bringing the plane into an irreversible dive.



Daniel and Esther Nelson and their children Marguerite and Daniel.

Of the 27 aboard all perished save one, a 24-year-old rice farmer who had been brought into the plot because of his detailed knowledge of the coastline and of a place where the Miss Macao might be hidden. Among the passengers were Daniel and Esther Nelson, their daughter Marguerite and son Daniel.

The Nelson family was not a stranger to tragedy. Daniel Nelson, Jr.’s pioneer missionary father, Daniel Nelson, Sr., had been killed by a stray bullet during a skirmish in 1926 between opposing military forces in Xinyang, Henan. His brother, Bert Nelson, had been captured by the Communists during the civil unrest of 1930 and killed two years later by his captors.

Despite these tragedies, those who knew Nelson valued not only his intimate understanding and love of the Chinese people, but also his irresistible enthusiasm and good humor. His unusual degree of vision and originality were coupled with the drive, efficiency and daring to make vision a reality. Developing new projects always engaged his mind.

An incurable optimist, he has been quoted as saying in regard to one project, “Some said it would be impossible, but we Christians specialize in the impossible.” Even in his death, his faith — inherent in all that he did — was to impact many around the globe.

The Law and Discipleship

Dear Disciples of Jesus,

The season of Lent is a wonderful time for reflection and self-examination. It is a time to consider not only our spiritual condition but our Lord's direction for our growth and development as his disciples.

Midway through this Lenten journey I was captivated by the lessons for the Third Sunday in Lent. I also was fascinated by the appointed epistle lesson for the Anglican community. It is an interesting combination of the Ten Commandments in Exodus 20 and Paul's affirming words about the Law in Romans 7.

In our culture the word "law" seems to have an increasingly negative connotation. We have grown to resent anything that might restrict our freedom. "Law" sounds so authoritative, and we prefer not to be bound to any other authority than ourselves. In all our striving to define love as acceptance and tolerance, we accept those who refuse to live under the Law; we tolerate persecution and killing those who are called to enforce the law. Moral law, or morality, has been so relativized and personalized that any attempt to discuss moral behavior in absolute terms is considered a form of oppression.

Many indicators point to the fact that we have a problem with our understanding of the Law and its proper use, not just in our culture, but even among Christians. Such confusion will only lead to even greater moral decay and chaos. Recently, while watching the news in an airport terminal, I quietly commented that there is no need for anyone to attack us from the outside, as we seem to be on a path of self-destruction on the inside. Those sitting near me who overheard my comment all agreed. I believe that the Body of Christ has a role to play in overcoming that confusion by embracing, in word and deed, a proper understanding and use of the Law.

In attempting to clarify this understanding of the Law we begin where the Ten Commandments begin — with a relationship. That is my first point. The Law is relational. It is a covenant, an agreement between



From the Bishop

Bishop John Bradosky

God and his people. Yes, it is authoritative because it comes from God. God initiates the relationship. God provides these commands and teachings because he loves his people. He gives his people his name and tells them what he is willing to be and do for them: "I am the Lord your God." "You belong to me, and I belong to you. I heard your cries in the midst of your bondage and slavery in Egypt. I delivered you from oppression with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm. I saved you because I love you and want what is best for you."

There is a wonderful interplay between the indicative and the imperative tenses in these words. The imperatives always follow the indicative. The commandments are an indication of the relationship and the relationship demands healthy boundaries for living in the relationship.

Every commandment must circle back to the preamble. God is saying to his people, "Other people will have other gods, but not you because I am your God and you are my people. Other people may take my name in vain but not you, because I am your God and you are my people." That is the way we must read each commandment.

The first table of the Law — the first three commandments — deal with our relationship with God and the second table of the Law — the last seven commandments — deal with our relationships with one another. It is only in living within the Law that we find true freedom from oppression. Apart from the Law, the oppression of chaos and anarchy will follow.

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Every relationship of love has expectations for the beloved. Spouses have expectations for one another. Parents have expectations for their children. Children have expectations for their parents. Friends have expectations for each other. The very nature of love is to expect the very best of the beloved.

Every parent understands that relationships also include consequences. When expectations are not met, when the boundaries are crossed, there must be consequences for our actions. Loving relationships demand accountability and responsibility.

Many hold a three-fold understanding of the purpose of the Law:

1. It keeps our sinful nature in check through fear of punishment.
2. It is a mirror that reflects both God's design for the human heart and at the same time this reflection exposes our sin and our need for Christ Jesus, the Savior.
3. It is a guide for faithful living once we come to faith in Jesus.

It is for this reason that Paul writes in his letter to the Romans that the Law and commandments are holy, righteous and good. What follows in Paul's writing is my second point. The reality of sin in our life affects every relationship. Inside of each of us a battle is raging, as Martin Luther describes it, between the old Adam and the new Adam, between sin and righteousness, between my authority and God's authority.

Paul writes, "For what I want to do I do not do, but what I hate I do. ... I do not do the good I want to do, but the evil I do not want to do — this I keep on doing. ... What a wretched man I am" (*Romans 7:15, 19, 24*).

It is the Law that forces us to face this reality. Paul is not bound by pretending to be holy and righteous. He is freed to be honest and candid about this internal struggle.

In my 34 years as a sports official, I incurred a tremendous amount of criticism. I was the subject of name calling and curses that expressed amazing creativity with the English language through word choices and combinations of words. A wise senior official and mentor reminded me not to be so focused on their criticism but to engage in my own self-criticism. He said, "What makes you a professional is that you engage in self-criticism and are constantly striving to improve what you are called to do. You must keep learning and growing."

As I thought about his words and applied it to my spiritual life, seeking to overcome a sense of self-protection and defensiveness, I asked myself this question, "What is the worst thing that can be said about me?" It didn't take me long to come to this conclusion, "I am a worthless sinner deserving death." I realized that I had already accepted that verdict on my life. Additional criticism can't be worse than that reality.

This is the nature of truth that sets you free. It is only when you reach this point that you realize the power of the Gospel. Only then did I realize my complete dependence on Christ for my redemption and salvation. There isn't a commandment I haven't broken. There isn't a relationship that has not been affected by my selfishness. I no longer have to pretend to be righteous and holy on the basis of my own accomplishments and works. I am depending on the One who imparts his righteousness to me on the basis of faith. I trust in him and all that he has accomplished on my behalf. What I have learned in my own life is that people will never listen to your understanding of the truth from a position of self-righteousness, but only from the position of a redeemed sinner.

That I am a worthless sinner deserving death is an important understanding of my life, but it is not the final verdict on my life. Through the grace and mercy of Christ in his death on the cross that paid the price for my sin and died the death I deserve, I have received complete forgiveness. Through his resurrection, I have received new life now and eternal life in his kingdom forever. In the waters of Baptism and by the power of the Holy Spirit, I became his child and heir of his kingdom. This is the constant internal struggle between my sinful self and the righteousness imparted to me by Jesus.

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And that brings me to a third point. What does this struggle produce in us? I believe Jesus intends for this struggle to produce both greater trust or faith in him and the transformation of our lives. My fear, however, is that we reduce the entire Gospel to what Dallas Willard calls, in his book *Divine Conspiracy*, “the Gospel of Sin Management.” He raises the concern that, on both ends of the theological spectrum, the Christian message has been reduced to how we deal with sin and wrongdoing.

Have we reduced the Gospel to the bumper sticker message: “Christians Aren’t Perfect, Just Forgiven”? If you have faith in Jesus Christ, you are forgiven, while in every other respect, your life is no different from those who have no faith in Christ at all. In this understanding of the faith, how we live makes little difference. It is only that we are prepared to die being insured of eternal life because our sins are forgiven. Of course, there are those who err on the other side of this equation and attempt to achieve eternal life by their own works and ways, believing their holy living forces God’s hand in declaring their salvation and granting them eternal life. Neither expression seems faithful.

Between these two extremes there is a path of discipleship. Repentance and amendment of life are still part of our understanding of confession and forgiveness. Abiding in Christ and his presence in our lives makes a difference in how we live, our values, our priorities, our relationships, our words, and our deeds. This life in Christ transforms our worldviews and our behaviors.

This transformation is not a few tips for self-improvement. It is a radical transformation of death and new life. Dietrich Bonhoeffer writes: *“The cross is laid on every Christian. As we embark upon discipleship, we surrender ourselves to Christ in union with his death — we give over our lives to death. When Christ calls a person, he bids him come and die. ... But if we lose our lives in his service and carry our cross, we shall find our lives again in the fellowship of the cross with Christ.”* (*The Cost of Discipleship*, pp. 89, 91)

From the beginning of our lives in Christ, we are “dead men walking.” That is both Law and Gospel.

We are dead men and women walking, dead to sin. We are walking, we are living a new life in Christ, even now! This reality — the reality of the cross and resurrection — frees us for the priorities of the Kingdom of Heaven, for ministry and mission, and for true discipleship, following Jesus.

The cross of Christ is the greatest sign of love the world will ever know. To live under the cross is to live a life filled with love. It is to live a life of loving service for the sake of others. It is to live a life of sharing this glorious good news, until the whole world knows. That is the nature of following Christ. In the midst of his love we learn from his Word, his teaching, and his commandments what needs to be transformed in us. We are not merely trying to imitate Christ but acknowledging that Christ seeks to be formed in us and manifested in us. (See Galatians 4:19) The alternative is falling into antinomianism and proclaiming “cheap grace.”

Because we are at once saint and sinner, we are never finished with this struggle and we must constantly turn to God’s Word, confess our sins, remember our baptismal identity, receive the Eucharist, and remain intimately involved in the fellowship of other faithful followers of Christ Jesus. As his disciples we are obedient to Jesus’ commands. “If you love me, you will keep my commandments. And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Helper, to be with you forever, even the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him. You know him, for he dwells with you and will be in you” (*John 14:15-17*).

Finally, this understanding of our lives in Christ changes the way we share the Gospel of Jesus as well as his teachings, commandments and laws. Life in Christ is more than a list of “don’ts,” “shouldn’ts,” “can’ts” and “mustn’ts.” It’s not just what you give up that makes a difference in your life, it’s what you put in its place.

Luther understood this well. As he wrote the catechism, he not only dealt with the negative side of the commandments regarding what we are to avoid, but in his explanation to each commandment he wrote what it is we should be doing as a substitute for the negative behavior that was abandoned.

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Luther writes, “we should love and trust God above all things ... call on God in every time of need ... worship him with prayer, praise and thanksgiving ... assist our neighbor, protect him in danger and want ... be pure and chaste in word and deed, honoring husbands and wives ... protect our neighbor’s property ... speak well of our neighbor ... preserve and care for our neighbor’s family and property.”

My final point is that Jesus understands the Law as a matter of the heart. He summarized all of the teachings of the Law and the Prophets in just two commandments. “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, mind and strength and the second is like it. You shall love your neighbor as yourself.”

In the Law we see the true nature of love that finds freedom in the expectations, boundaries that provide safety, a covenant that defines the relationship, order that prevents chaos, and integrity that exposes our sin and points to our redemption and salvation, a life-giving relationship with God through faith in Jesus Christ.

Our world is dying to experience and understand this life-giving love of God even in his gracious giving of the Law. May such contemplation and action fill this Lenten season.

Kathy Jacobson is retiring

Kathy Jacobson is retiring after serving as Administrative Assistant in the Financial Office in Minnesota for the NALC’s eight years.

She served Lutheran CORE and the WordAlone Network prior to the start of the NALC.

Kathy has been a dedicated and gifted staff member for the NALC. Her proofreading skills have significantly improved all NALC communications.



Kathy Jacobson

She is a dear sister in Christ, and will be greatly missed. We wish her and her husband, Jim, all the best in retirement.

Being Human in a Posthuman Age: *The Promise of Christian Anthropology*

Ancient Evangelical Future Conference | June 7-8, 2018

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The Academy

By NALC Renewal Team

Renewal is a church coming alive in Jesus, centering on four key elements of our identity as Lutherans: the Word; the water; the wheat and wine; and our witness.

Theologians and sociologists have studied the great awakenings, revivals, and renewals seen in the church throughout the world and throughout history. There are five underlying elements that are found at the center of each time of renewal. Whether in one church, in a region, or across the world, the studies have observed that these five things are present in each revival: recovery of the Gospel, renewed individuals (discipleship), evangelism and outreach through relationships, the instituted Means of Grace in worship, and extraordinary prayer.

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.

“Your people will rebuild the ancient ruins and will raise up the age-old foundations; you will be called Repairer of Broken Walls, Restorer of Streets with Dwellings.” — Isaiah 58:12

Introduction

The root meaning of the word “equipping” (*katartizo* in Greek) describes what a doctor does. A doctor “equips” a body that has brokenness. Equipping is to put what is broken into right relationship with the rest of the body. Whether it is setting a bone or popping a shoulder back into place, the doctor sees each individual part while simultaneously seeing the whole.

Any EMT, doctor or nurse will explain that it is futile to put a small bandage on a big problem. The same is true in our relationships with God, but how often are we satisfied with the quick fix? God desires more than that. He desires restoration — all of the wrongs being made right, brokenness healed, sin atoned for — that we may come in and go out, both

now and forever more. It is the wholeness of the peace (*shalom*) of God.

As disciples — followers of Jesus Christ — we are content no longer to simply be “believers,” for we have had an encounter with the unwavering grace of Jesus Christ who has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of his Son, in whom there is the redemption and forgiveness of sins. As we journey to the cross and empty tomb this year with stirred hearts, we recognize this as a time of “equipping,” where the Great Physician takes what is broken and puts it into right relationship with the rest of the body.

Sin has corrupted and distorted our relationships with God and each other. Each month, as the family of God, we will be focusing on a specific area that has been broken and distorted. We will be asking tough questions. But our prayer is that, as disciples, we may live into what God is setting right, fixing, repairing, and restoring.

Jesus is the ultimate “Repairer of Broken Walls” or “Repairer of the Breach,” and, through his death and resurrection, our lives are now built on the Solid Rock, the Ebenezer, the Cornerstone. And not only that, we have been invited into the great journey to be disciples serving as an Ebenezer, a testimony, a real-life object lesson that we can confess, standing on the shoulders of the giants who have come before, that we too may be called “Repairer of Broken Walls” and “Restorer of Streets With Dwellings.”

What Does This Mean?

We’ve heard the deep need that has been articulated by many leaders through congregational reports, social media, a survey of Mission District deans, SWOT analysis, narrative interviews, and Mission Festival feedback. One of the most consistent pieces of feedback that is received is: “I didn’t learn this in school, and I really needed

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to.” While long-term pieces are being put into place, there is an immediate need. To that end, we are utilizing the gifts that God has given us already — NALC leaders sharing their knowledge with other NALC leaders.

Welcome to The Academy

Join us! Each month we will be hosting a free webinar based on expressed needs by NALC leaders for NALC leaders. Some of the topics we will be connecting with are:

+ Culture Shock — What does it mean to be the church in 2018 when it feels like there has been a cultural earthquake?

+ Be Visionary — Sharpening your vision and defining your mission requires strategic planning and preparation. Helping develop “go thinking.”

+ Embrace the Mess? — Mission is messy and sometimes can feel challenging. Dealing with conflict isn’t easy, but it is critical to a healthy congregation.

+ Technology in the Tool Bag — How technology can be an amazing tool for both mission and discipleship and make the mission easier for you as a leader.

+ Leading Effective Change — Leading effective change is an emotional business, especially in churches. It is not enough just to “manage” change; people need to be led through change.

+ Spend Time with People the Way Jesus Did — Why visitation and relational ministry are critical to ministry as a leader. Some practical tools to help equip you for the mission.

+ Develop a Supportive FaithWeb — Grandparents (both biological and adoptive) have a unique role to play in this discipleship process through faithwebbing.

+ Burn Out and the Leader — A critical topic to address in our culture today. Is more of an explanation required?

+ The Digital World — How do I create a PowerPoint? Do I need a license for that? Other random tools in a digital world that can be helpful for everyday life.

The leader hosting the webinar will be available to connect one-on-one following the webinar, and some will also be hosting breakout sessions during the Mission Festival in Denver. Finally, for those who are interested in taking next steps, there will be opportunities for small-group conversation (MasterMind Groups). Watch for specific days, times, and connection information in the near future.

Andrew Fuller named Communications Director for NALC

Andrew S. Fuller has been named the NALC’s Communications Director. He will begin the new position on April 16.

Andrew will be serving the NALC three-quarter time while attending seminary at Trinity School for Ministry in Ambridge, Pa., studying to be a priest in the Anglican Church in North America.

Andrew is currently the Director of Communications at Upper Arlington Lutheran Church, an NALC congregation in Columbus, Ohio.



Andrew Fuller

He previously served as Digital Communications Coordinator at Wheaton College and as Director of Communications and Technology at First Baptist Church of Wheaton, Ill.

The Communications Director works with other NALC leaders to develop and implement communications and marketing strategies to support overall NALC goals and messages.

Congregational Leadership: A Ministry of Reconciliation

All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation; that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation. — 2 Corinthians 5:18-19 ESV

There is a TV commercial playing these days in which an insurance company advertises, “We know a few things because we’ve seen a few things.” After several years working with pastors and congregational leaders, Bishop Bradosky and I can say, “We know a few things because we’ve seen a few things.”

One of the things we’ve “seen” and come to acknowledge is that often congregational leaders (pastors and lay leaders) have little experience addressing disagreements, tension and conflict. Without this experience and knowledge, actions are undertaken that actually increase the tension and heighten the conflict. Some of these actions are holding “secret meetings,” attempting to keep the pastor, other leaders or the congregation “in the dark” for fear of a negative reaction, and trying to force council members or pastor out of office rather than dealing with the situation in a positive way.

It is all too common for congregational leaders (again, pastors and lay leaders) to approach and deal with tension and conflict from the perspective of power and authoritarian strategies, rather than Christ-like love and straightforward communication. Unfortunately, the ways of the world are often the “fall-back” position of leaders in the church. When we don’t know how to handle disagreements, we try what we learned in the secular world. We ignore the ministry we have been given by God — the ministry of reconciliation!

In every instance of tension, disagreement and conflict in the church, the overarching goal must be to work toward forgiveness and reconciliation. The goal is never to “get one’s own way” or to “push



Ministry Matters

Pastor David Wendel

Assistant to the Bishop
for Ministry and Ecumenism

one’s own personal agenda.” Sadly, this often seems to be the goal. Does the congregation belong to any one individual? Can any one individual or small group of individuals dictate strategy, direction or decisions of the congregation as a whole?

Some members of the church claim authority or decision-making power based on the fact that they are charter members or “big givers” in the congregation. Pastors sometimes claim such power and authority based on their office as pastor, failing to work together with other leaders for the good of the congregation as a whole. Such attitudes hinder open and honest communication, finally leading away from a ministry of reconciliation.

In the passage above, St. Paul was writing to the Corinthian congregation where there was ongoing, significant conflict. It appears individuals and groups of individuals were involved, with some writing Paul to ask for assistance, advice and counsel.

The entire “Corinthian correspondence” reflects the ongoing conversation between the apostle and the troubled congregation. In Chapter 5, Paul reminds the divided parties that as God reconciled the world to himself, through Christ, we have been given a “ministry of reconciliation.” In all things, in every way, we are to work for reconciliation — in the world, in our homes and families and, yes, in the church!

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Paul speaks directly to those who are at odds in the church in Corinth, saying, “So we are ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal through us. We beseech you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God.” In the midst of congregational conflict, Paul is saying that they are to be reconciled to God, as they are working toward reconciliation with each other.

And what does this ministry of reconciliation look like in the local congregation? Jesus describes this himself in Matthew 18, where he teaches a specific strategy for dealing with conflict between believers. At the same time, our Lord provides us with godly principles that offer faithful, fruitful, Christ-like ways of handling issues, concerns and difficulties within the community of faith. In a real sense, Jesus is describing the “ministry of reconciliation” which is to be the hallmark of the Body of Christ. Here are principles presented by Jesus:

1. Don't globalize conflicts or disagreements. Deal with such situations “one on one” if possible. Don't involve others in personal conflicts.
2. If one-on-one conversation doesn't bear fruit, go to church leaders and the congregation — always with the goal of reconciliation.
3. Have conversation openly and honestly with all involved parties — this is the only way to resolve conflicts and issues. Refuse to participate in “secret meetings” aimed at complaining about persons or situations. “Take no part in the unfruitful works of darkness, but instead expose them. ... Look carefully then how you walk, not as unwise, but as wise, making the most of the time, because the days are evil” (*Ephesians 5:11, 15-16*).
4. Be clear about shared responsibility and shared decision-making. Council and pastor together comprise the congregational “leadership team.” They are called to work together for the good of the congregation as a whole. No one person may usurp the authority of the whole. Similarly, the congregation has certain shared responsibilities. No person or group of people may usurp the responsibilities of the congregation.

5. Bear in mind that the goal within the congregation is always reconciliation. Repentance, forgiveness, and speaking the truth in love are all aimed at reconciliation.

We are called to be ambassadors for Christ — in every thought, word and action. What we say and do are to be shared in the light of Christ's own presence, not in darkness or shadow. May our congregations be communities of faithful disciples where leaders model straightforward, direct, loving communication aimed at reconciliation!



Youth and Family Ministry

Registration is open for the 2018 Lutheran Week Youth Ministry Symposium in August. Check out the NALC registration site for details or contact us.

Our keynote speaker this year is Thomas O'Neill. Tom is a philanthropist at Second Harvest Heartland 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.

Breakout sessions will also be offered.

Come and get connected to others in the NALC in ministry to youth.

Gary and Laurie Pecuch have served in youth ministry for more than 35 years at St. John's Evangelical Lutheran Church in Grove City, Ohio. They serve the NALC as youth ministry coaches. They provide a variety of resources for NALC congregations free of charge through their website, faithwebbing.com. You may contact them at faithwebbing@gmail.com.



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