

NALC News

North American Lutheran Church

May 2018

Nominations for 2018 announced

2018 NALC Convocation will elect members of Executive Council, Court of Adjudication and NALS Board of Regents

The NALC Nominating Committee has announced nominees for positions to be elected by the 2018 NALC Convocation Aug. 15-17 in Denver, Colo.

Three pastors and two lay people have been nominated for the Executive Council. The Convocation will elect one pastor and one lay person to four-year terms on the council.

Nominees for the lay position are Richard E. Jansak of Hendersonville, N.C., and Larry D. Shull of Spartanburg, S.C.

Nominees for the clergy position are Pastor Timothy E. Johnson of Abbotsford, British Columbia; Pastor Melinda H. Jones of Summerville, S.C., and Pastor James R. Palan of Tuscaloosa, Alabama.

The Executive Council oversees the work and policies of the NALC, acting as the church's Board of Directors.

Biographical information on the nominees is available as a supplement to the *NALC News* at thenalc.org/nominations.

James Gale of Washington, D.C., and Pastor John J. Moffett of Ashland, Ohio, have been nominated for four-year terms on



Richard Jansak



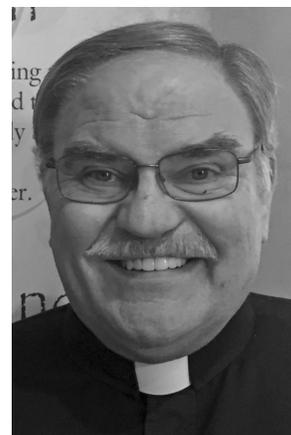
Larry Shull



Timothy Johnson



Melinda Jones



James Palan



James Gale



John Moffett

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Nominees for North American Lutheran Seminary Board of Regents

The NALC Nominating Committee has announced the names of 10 people who have been nominated for the North American Lutheran Seminary Board of Regents.

The 2018 NALC Convocation Aug. 15-17 in Denver, Colo., will elect three members of the seminary board for six-year terms.

The Board of Regents nominees are Pastor Wendy A.W. Berthelsen of Midlothian, Texas; Pastor Dennis R. Di Mauro of Herndon, Va.; Pastor Phillip E. Gagnon of St. Albert, Alberta; Kevin D. Langholz of Pittsburgh, Pa.; Pastor James T. Lehmann of Fithian, Ill., Pastor Troy A. Mulvaine of Tonawanda, N.Y.; Pastor David M. Phillips of Watertown, Wis.; Pastor Donna Hacker Smith of Champaign, Ill.; Pastor Norman J. Sulaica Jr. of Three Rivers, Texas; and Roger Weyersberg of Owosso, Mich.

The Board of Regents oversees the operation of the North American Lutheran Seminary.

Biographical information on the nominees is available as an online supplement to the May NALC

News at thenalc.org/nominations.



Wendy Berthelsen



Dennis Di Mauro



Phillip Gagnon



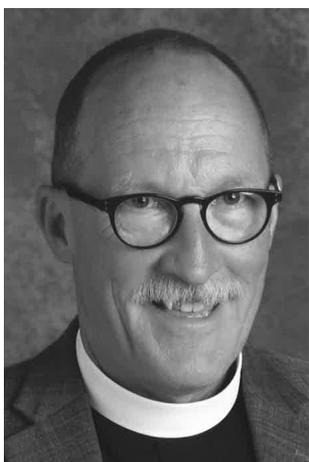
Kevin Langholz



James Lehmann



Troy Mulvaine



David Phillips



Donna Smith



Norman Sulaica



Roger Weyersberg

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 NALC Youth Leaders 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. 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 on June 1 and July 1 from requests received by those deadlines.



CALLING



GATHERING



ENLIGHTENING



SANCTIFYING

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.

Lord, make us combustible material!

Dear disciples of Jesus throughout the North American Lutheran Church:

Christ is Risen! Alleluia!
He is risen indeed! Alleluia!

Our journey through the Easter season leads us to the celebration of Pentecost. Following his resurrection, Jesus instructed his disciples to stay where they were until they had received the Holy Spirit.

“When the day of Pentecost came, they were all together in one place. Suddenly a sound like the blowing of a violent wind came from heaven and filled the whole house where they were sitting. They saw what seemed to be tongues of fire that separated and came to rest on each of them. All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in tongues as the Spirit enabled them.”
(Acts 2:1-4)

I have often reflected on the wind and the breath of the Spirit as I prepared for Pentecost, but this year my focus shifted to the reference in the Scripture to the flames. Remembering flames in the fireplace this long winter reminded me of how steady and unpredictable they seem. In one sense, they are steady as they burn and, in another sense, they seem unpredictable in their ebb and flow, rising and falling.

Fire is an interesting topic in Scripture. Fire is used in two ways that are in sharp contrast. On one hand, fire is a sign of God’s judgment, wrath and a means of purification. On the other hand, fire is a sign of God’s power and presence.

Those references to fire throughout the Bible are worth time for meditation as we prepare for Pentecost. I offer a few for your consideration:

1. God spoke to Moses through a burning bush.
2. Israel was led through the wilderness by a pillar of cloud and fire.



From the Bishop

Bishop John Bradosky

3. God answered the prayers of Elijah with fire on Mount Carmel.
4. The sacrifices in the temple were consumed by fire.
5. The smoke from the burning incense filled the holiest places in the temple.
6. God tells Jeremiah that his Word is like fire.
7. John says Jesus will baptize us with the Holy Spirit and with fire.
8. Jesus says everyone will be salted with fire.
9. Paul says fire will test every believer’s work.
10. Paul also says that Jesus will come with blazing fire.
11. James says a spark or small flame will start a forest fire.
12. Revelation reminds us that God’s eyes are like blazing fires.

Perhaps my favorite story involving fire, beyond Pentecost, is the story of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, who refused to bow down before the idols of a king. Because of their faith they found themselves in a burning fiery furnace. Reflecting on the meaning of that story one pastor wrote, “The people of God are in harmony with the will of God only when they are willing to burn for what they believe.” Faith with power will always be singed with

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the fire of the Holy Spirit. The events of Pentecost are recorded in Acts 2, and by Chapter 3 some of the disciples are already in jail because of their fiery faith.

In Luke 12:49, Jesus says, “I have come to bring fire on the earth, and how I wish it were already kindled!” His goal was to burn away that which needed to be destroyed so that the fire of the presence of God might be clearly revealed.

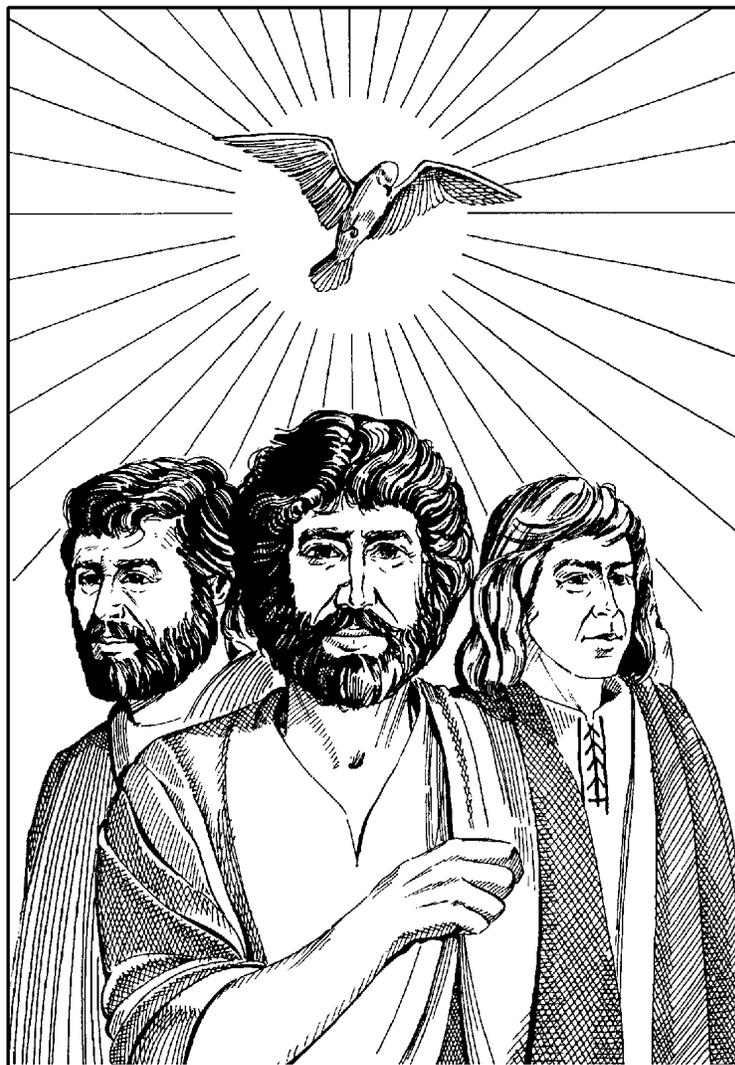
Perhaps Jesus is suggesting in those words that he came to set us on fire.

When you think of your congregation compared to the Church on Pentecost, would you say that your congregation is “on fire” with the Spirit or “under fire” from conflicts within and pressure from the world without? Some believe the Church has lost its fire. As it has grown in institutional strength it has become weaker spiritually.

While the person and work of the Holy Spirit may seem confusing to some, Martin Luther’s explanation of the third article of the Apostles’ Creed is very clear. (This will be the theme for both our theological lectures and our Convocation in August.)

I believe that I cannot by my own reason or strength believe in Jesus Christ, my Lord, or come to him; but the Holy Spirit has called me by the Gospel, enlightened me with his gifts, sanctified and kept me in the true faith. In the same way he calls, gathers, enlightens, and sanctifies the whole Christian Church on earth, and keeps it with Jesus Christ in the one true faith. In this Christian Church he daily and richly forgives all my sins and the sins of all believers. On the Last Day he will raise me and all the dead and give eternal life to me and all believers in Christ. This is most certainly true.

The Church can do nothing apart from the Holy Spirit. From without and from within the Holy Spirit is alive and at work. Perhaps the greater issue is our awareness and willingness to grow and mature in all that it means to be called, enlightened and sanctified in the one true faith in Jesus Christ as individuals, congregations and the Body of Christ.



This same Holy Spirit will transform our ministry. We will become fearless in sharing our faith in Jesus Christ with others even if it causes them to question their own beliefs. We will search for spiritual solutions to care for others, praying with them, anointing them, asking Christ for discernment, direction and knowledge about their problems so he can use us for greater healing in their lives. Perhaps we will become less resistant to the reality of miracles, healing, signs and wonders and trust in the Holy Spirit to act with power as it is described in the book of Acts.

It is this same Holy Spirit, first manifest at Pentecost, that is at work in Christ’s mission of making disciples. It is the Holy Spirit that forms faith, transforms life, produces genuine love for others and equips us for the mission of “making disciples of all nations.”

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Our world is not so different from the context of Pentecost. It was just as immoral, pagan and self-centered as our own culture. The world needs more from the Body of Christ than a word of affirmation for its values of tolerance and acceptance. Morality has been replaced with sexual confusion. Family is anyone who cares. Love and selfishness seem inseparable. The longing for meaningful relationships through social media leave many more empty than fulfilled. Fear of the future is manifest in the epidemic levels of drug addiction, depression and suicide rates among our children. The world needs what only Christ can bring — redemption and salvation.

We know the disciples of Jesus made a profound difference in the culture following Pentecost. We must ask how the Body of Christ is making a difference in this culture? If what we are doing isn't working, what should we do? Jesus said, set it on fire! If you want the church to have power, Jesus said, set it on fire! If you want the church to be what Jesus intended it to be, Jesus said, set it on fire!

I am convinced that the Holy Spirit is still accessible and ready to bring that fire, but fire cannot take place when it is an environment that is hostile to combustion. How do we become combustible material so that our lives bear both the light and heat of the Holy Spirit?

While there were many experiences with Jesus that prepared his disciples for Pentecost, I offer my observations from the first and second chapters of Acts. From the Resurrection to Pentecost the disciples:

1. Stayed together.
2. Prayed together.
3. Grew from 12 to 120 people.
4. Were confident in the truth of the Gospel.
5. Were convinced of God's presence.
6. Their hearts became obedient.
7. Their focus shifted from self-preservation to mission.

Their prayer time together produced both inner peace and boldness making them combustible material. Whenever fire breaks out, it is hard to keep it in one place. It's contagious. Those men and women who first composed the Church found themselves going everywhere telling others about Jesus. Difficulties disappeared, individual goals disintegrated when they took their eyes off of themselves and made Jesus their focus. Problems became possibilities and stumbling blocks became stepping stones and what they thought was defeat became their greatest victory.

Set the Church on fire! This fire of light and truth can change the world. This fire has transformed the lives of individuals and nations. It will replace falsehood with truth. This fire can warm our hard hearts and make them pulse with the passion of Christian love, offering strength to the weak, hope to the hopeless, power to the powerless and love to the loveless. It is the only power we have, and it is all we need.

It is my prayer that you experience that same fire in your life and in your congregation this Pentecost and each day, following Christ Jesus.

It is good to be with you following him.

Bishop John Bradosky

Nominations

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the NALC Court of Adjudication. Two people will be elected.

The Court of Adjudication decides appeals from disciplinary decisions and questions regarding interpretation of the NALC's governing documents.

Biographical information on the nominees is available online at thenalc.org/nominations.

Additional nominations are possible for both Executive Council and Court of Adjudication. Such nominations should be submitted to the Nominating Committee by June 30.

Blessed to be a blessing

Oromo Evangelical Church in Columbus dedicates new building

By Tom Slemmer

I've been musing over that well-known passage in Genesis 12:1-3, where God tells Abraham that he will bless him abundantly, but the blessing has a big purpose. It is meant to produce a blessing for others and by it all the people of the world will be blessed. This promise is considered a banner covenant in the Bible and one that I have been taught all my Christian life applies to us as well. We are blessed in order to be a blessing.

I've been thinking how this wonderful biblical principle applies to the Oromo Evangelical Church in Columbus, Ohio, in their new church home and the miraculous speed by which this all transpired.

Why was God in such a rush after all these years of struggle and after a dusty Mission Loan Fund had been on the books at Upper Arlington Lutheran Church (UALC) for three decades? Why was God in such a rush now? Is there something deeper going on?

For me it was clear that **God was on the move**, doing something big, but what? Was it just to provide a needed home for this small, growing, Oromo-speaking congregation? Or was there something far bigger afoot?

The story began last summer when the council of UALC was approached by the Oromo congregation for funding out of our Mission Loan Fund. Incredibly, this fund had been on UALC's books for decades as a result of faithful members many years ago who pledged that a portion of their gifts for a UALC building expansion would also be used to help other missions grow. The fund had been sitting idle for years with a balance of \$151,000.

Initial meetings led to an enthusiastic partnership to help the Oromo leaders find more suitable space.



Pastor Kansa Deresa, Bishop John Bradosky, Pastor Teshome Deingede, Pastor Gemechis Buba, and Pastor David Wendel posed for a photo before the dedication service began.

It began with an extensive, but fruitless, property search with many property visits and much head scratching.

My initial "back of envelope" calculation showed that the absolute most the Oromo congregation could afford would be \$1.2 million, based on getting a loan with a down payment from the Mission Loan Fund. New construction was financially out of the question so we focused on renovating existing space.

In November, while studying the problem, I was discouraged. Nothing seemed to work. There simply was not enough money to provide enough space for this growing congregation.

That evening I started searching the internet again for other properties and miraculously a brand-new listing for a church just outside of our target area showed up. It seemed perfect, if perhaps a little out of the way, and the price — \$1.2 million! But we would have to move fast.

We met at the property 48 hours later, and I will never forget Oromo Pastor Teshome Deingede's

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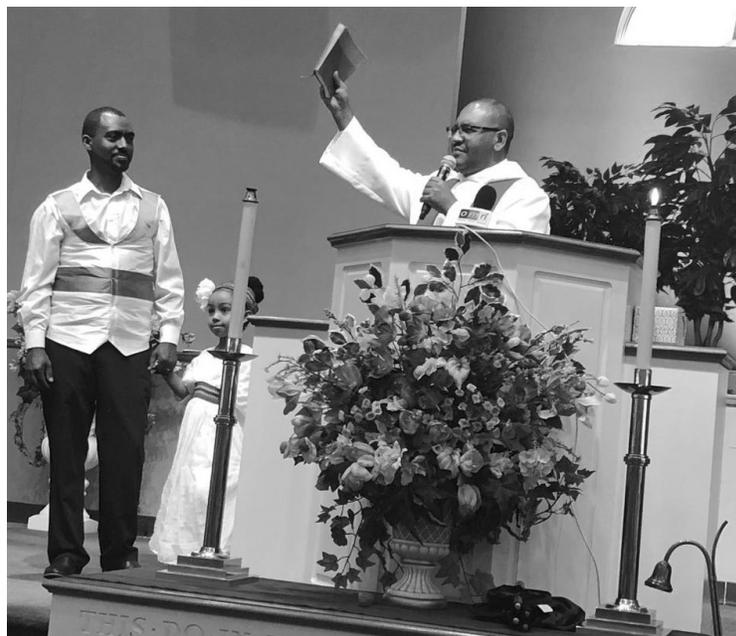
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excited reaction as he walked through every room in this large church exclaiming, “Oh, Lord Jesus.” And when he saw the huge gymnasium there was an even louder exclamation, “Oh, Lord Jesus!” It was then that he coined the phrase, “**God is on the move,**” never losing faith that God had intended this vacant church for them which was much larger than any of us had dreamed.

There were exhaustive details in our work to swiftly accomplish this purchase, but a few were clear signs to me of God’s direct intervention. **God was on the move!** Let me mention five:

1. Mission Loan Fund: Over 30 years ago, faithful UALC members had a vision of helping to launch other mission efforts. This visionary fund launched this effort which would not have been possible without it.
2. Saturday night property search: Is it a coincidence that at the very moment of discouragement the perfect opportunity arose, at the exact price we needed?
3. Loan: Banks were appropriately cautious about lending to a small, poor congregation. In the end, only one bank would agree to the loan at exactly the amount we needed to proceed.
4. Oromo congregation: In a one-night appeal, members of this immigrant community pledged \$41,000. Incredible!
5. UALC support: The initial request to the Mission Loan Fund was met with enthusiastic support from the congregation with funds growing to \$267,000 and received a standing ovation on Sunday morning.
6. NALC support: We had to move fast! Bishop John Bradosky’s leadership was essential to inspire the NALC congregations in Ohio to interject an appeal into their busy Advent seasons. The result was incredible! Lutheran churches throughout the region raised the needed \$100,000 in record time and exceeded the goal by an additional \$30,000. We now had more funds than we ever imagined!

The dream of a church home, that began years before, materialized in an instant. Why was God in



Pastor Gemechis Buba spoke at the dedication ceremony. He described how the work of the ancestor of this man and his daughter, six and seven generations before, had resulted in the translation of the Bible into Oromo and the faith of those who gathered that day in Columbus.

such a rush now? Could it be because there are now estimated over 200,000 speakers of the Oromo language in the United States and more than 5,000 in Columbus? Could it be that many of these Oromo speakers have never heard the Gospel? Could it be that Columbus is a destination for many of these new immigrants? Could it be that he wanted UALC to get out of the suburbs and into this mission field?

I don’t know the answer, but I have a strong sense that this miracle has much more in it than just a well-deserved church home for a small, growing congregation. **God is on the move here!**

And the Oromo church in Columbus has clearly been “blessed to be a blessing.”

The LORD had said to Abram, “Go from your country, your people and your father’s household to the land I will show you. I will make you into a great nation, and I will bless you; I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse; and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you.” — Genesis 12:1-3

Tom Slemmer is the past chair of Upper Arlington Lutheran Church in Columbus, Ohio.

Andrew Fuller, Joan Corniea and Brad Hales join NALC staff

The North American Lutheran Church has added three new people to its staff to better serve its congregations.

Joan Corniea has begun serving as Financial Assistant in the Financial Administration Office in Minnesota. With a solid background in accounting, Joan will assist Anne Gleason with NALC accounting and membership records.



Joan Corniea



Andrew Fuller



Brad Hales

Joan loves living in the Twin Cities and everything it offers. She enjoys the local sports teams and rarely misses watching the Vikings. A fan of all seasons, she relishes the short summer months after the long winters. She attends Grace Fellowship in Brooklyn Park, Minn.

Joan fills the position vacated by Kathy Jacobson's retirement. Kathy had served in this position since the start of the NALC.

Andrew Fuller has been named the NALC's Director of Communications. 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.

As Director of Communications, Andrew will work with other NALC leaders to develop and implement communications and marketing strategies to support overall NALC goals and messages.

Andrew has recently served as the Director of Communications at Upper Arlington Lutheran Church, an NALC congregation in Columbus, Ohio. He previously served as Digital Communications Coordinator for Wheaton College in Wheaton, Ill., and as Director of Communications and Technology at First Baptist Church of Wheaton, Ill.

Pastor Brad Hales has been named the Director of Domestic Mission for the NALC. He began this new

position on May 1. Pastor Hales will be serving the NALC part time while continuing to serve as pastor of Reformation Lutheran Church in Culpeper, Va.

Working together with Pastor Gemechis Buba, Assistant to the Bishop for Missions, the Director of Domestic Mission will work with NALC mission teams to develop a vision and strategy for mission work in North America.

The primary emphasis areas of this position are renewal and new starts, fully integrated with the discipleship initiative focus in the NALC.

Pastor Brad Hales has served as the chair of the Renewal Team, New Starts Team, and as Dean of the Virginia Mission District of the NALC.

Through the power of Jesus, Pastor Hales has helped to renew several older congregations in discipleship, outreach and mission. In 2009, his present congregation was given the Best Practices Award in Senior Adult Ministry by the National Council on Aging. Pastor Hales has authored multiple Bible studies and resources, including, *A Covenant of Aging*, published by Sola Publishing.

The NALC has a lean structure with the local church at its heart. The NALC's focus is on assisting the ministry of congregations, not on congregations assisting the ministry of the church body.

Update from Pastor Valery Hryhoryk

NALC Global Worker in Belarus

By Pastor Valery Hryhoryk

Dear brothers and sisters, life is beautiful and the Lord is good! It is springtime in Belarus, and we are celebrating the resurrection of our Lord.

In Belarus, we have two Easters due to the differences in the Gregorian and Julian calendars. One Easter is called Catholic; the other is called Orthodox. The mainstream Christian confession in Belarus is Orthodox, so the Orthodox Easter has somewhat greater attention. However, Catholics, Lutherans, Baptists and Pentecostals celebrate Easter on the "Catholic" date.

It is great to see snow melting and the sun shining in the sky. The Lord continues to uphold this planet and his Church! Thank you, Lord!

We have some good news to share with you, our faithful supporters. We are so grateful for you and for your ongoing, faithful support.

New deacon: At this year's Christmas service, Dima Nyefuodov was ordained as a liturgical deacon in the still unregistered Lutheran garage congregation in Vitebsk. This was a great event for the congregation since Dima represents a new



Dima Nyefuodov was ordained as a liturgical deacon.



generation of Lutherans in Belarus. He is 28. Dima graduated from a theological school in Odessa and attended a one-year course organized by the Theological Seminary in Koltyski, St. Petersburg, Russia. Please give thanks to God for Dima and ask the Lord to bless him for this holy service.

We continue with the youth meetings and gatherings in Vitebsk. The idea is still the same: to build a handshake relationship with the local youth and anyone who is interested in the Christian faith and Lutheranism. The meetings take place on Thursdays each week. The youth play games and watch Christian movies. After the movies, they have discussions. It is a great opportunity to share a Christian viewpoint on any issue raised in the movie just watched. Please pray for the seed of the Gospel to fall into good ground.

Especially pray for two people, Lyudmila and Maksim. Maksim is a young man and he has interest in Christianity, however, he is not baptized. Please pray for Maksim for the Lord to have him understand the importance of baptism and faith in the Lord. Lyudmila is a teacher of Belarus language at a secondary school. She has attended several services in the garage and seems to like it. She has an Orthodox background but knows very little about a personal relationship with Christ. Please pray for Lyudmila, for her personal relationship with the Lord to grow.

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On Duty for Good: We had a good opportunity for a charity ministry. The economic situation in Belarus is getting worse and, as a result, we have a lot of homeless and hungry people in the streets. In about two hours we met five people looking for food in the city trash cans. The people were just hungry and were looking for the remnants of food. Please thank the Lord for the opportunity to share the love of Jesus with such people and to witness about the living God.

Good Book publishers: Three new books are going to be printed in April. We print our books in Minsk at the state printing factory. The book ministry continues and this is amazing. We have recently sent a bulk shipment of books to Odessa, Ukraine. The border can be a big problem. The books we print are in Russian and in Ukrainian, but the policy these days is very anti-Russian. Our brothers and sisters in Ukraine are in great need of Lutheran literature. Belarus is the only place where Lutheran books continue to be printed on a regular basis. Please thank the Lord for the book ministry and our partners in this very important service.

Theological seminar: We just had a theological seminar in Vitebsk. Brothers and sisters from BLMF congregations came together to learn more about Holy Baptism and Holy Communion. Twenty-two people were present. This was a great theological event in Belarus. The Lord gave us courage to have the seminar and protected the event. The seminar was followed by the service of Holy Communion. Please give thanks for the seminar and for God's protection. Praise the Lord!

Music ministry: We continue our music ministry for the glory of God. We recently performed a concert in Vitebsk that was organized together with the city. The concert was called, "The Music of Your City." This was the first time ever we organized such a concert on such a high level. Praise the Lord! We had an opportunity to sing songs about spiritual things. Please thank the Lord for this.

Please continue to pray for the upcoming Bible camps this summer. Last year we had two Bible



camps outside of Belarus. However, it is important to continue with the children's ministry in Belarus. Dolsha (a place 20 km from Vitebsk) is a good place for this. Two years ago, we had 50 young people attend the camp. The Bible camp is organized as a tent camp with a small building that is used for cooking food. This year, we urgently need to replace the roof of a small house that is used as a kitchen.

Please pray for:

- + New partners in the ministry.
- + Upcoming Bible camps and the roof renovation project.
- + Book ministry.
- + Music ministry.
- + Charity ministry.
- + For the funds needed to support all BLMF ministries.
- + For the rebuilding of the Lutheran Church in Belarus.

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ, we thank God for you, for your faithfulness and support. Without you, the Lord's people, our ministry would be not possible. Thank you again from the bottom of our hearts. The Lord is good! Praise his name! Amen.

Update from Pastor Didi Panzo

NALC Global Worker in Democratic Republic of the Congo

By Pastor Didi Panzo

Praise to God our Father, the redeemer of our lives.

The city of Boma was hit by a strong wind storm recently. The storm damaged over a thousand houses in the town. Some of the houses were totally destroyed, and some are now without a roof.

The roof of the Lutheran church sanctuary was destroyed. On the following Sunday, we worshiped under sunshine, in the open air. No one was hurt at the church. But many families were scattered, and others passed away.

Please pray for the people of Boma, as they are mourning the loss of their homes and trying to rebuild.

Also pray for the Director of the Confessional Lutheran Church, as they are finding ways to rebuild the roof of the sanctuary. They do not have other places where they may worship, in either the case of rain, or of sunshine.



Lutheran Church in Boma, Democratic Republic of Congo, damaged by wind storm.

May God bless you as you pray for the needy.

For more information, to connect, or partner with the Panzo Family, please visit:
<http://www.thenalc.org/pastor-didi-panzo>.

Scriptural retirement: Serving and sharing Jesus

Retirement can mean different things to different people. It may mean working for some, and not working for others. It may mean spending time with the grandchildren or taking trips. It may mean finally having the time to serve, or focusing on new paths and career opportunities. Or it may mean caring for a loved one rather than getting to do something that you desire. Maybe you fall into one or several of these categories.

Retirement has a profound effect on people's time, health, lifestyles and purposes. We know that the

world may view retirement in certain ways. But how is retirement viewed through the lens of Holy Scripture?

Pastor Brad Hales, NALC Director of Domestic Mission, has developed a new Bible study resource called, *Scriptural Retirement: Serving and sharing Jesus*.

Enjoy this new resource that developed at the conclusion of the webinar series, "Renewing and Revitalizing an Aging Church," available for download at <https://bit.ly/2vtBAYS>.

Youth and Family Ministry

The connecting continues. Make sure someone from your congregation is connected to the NALC Youth Ministry Facebook page.

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

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.

Breakout sessions will also be offered as well as some opportunities to share our best practices with each other.

Beginning in September, online courses will be made available for free to partner congregations.

Meeting monthly, some of the topics included are: Creating a Healthy Youth Ministry Culture; Outcome-Based Ministry; Faith Webbing; Safeguarding; Models of Youth Ministry; Developing Daily Disciplines; and Disciplines for Beyond.

Each course includes access to a presentation, handouts, resources, an extended question and answer time period, and more. To find out more information, register today, or connect, please visit YMCoaches.com and complete the contact form.

Gary and Laurie Pecuch have served in youth ministry for more than 30 years at St. John's Lutheran Church in Grove City, Ohio. They serve the NALC as youth ministry coaches and provide a variety of no-cost resources for NALC congregations through their website. Visit faithwebbing.com and fill out the contact form.

Appeal benefits your North American Lutheran Seminary

Now, more than ever before in our brief history as a church body and seminary, your help is needed to form and deploy orthodox, confessional, mission-focused pastors. The need is urgent, both now and for the future.

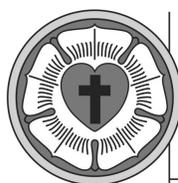
Your North American Lutheran Seminary is already answering the call to form future pastors with a resounding, "Yes, with the help of God — and you."

NALS seminarians are disciples of our Lord Jesus Christ, committed to Christ and his mission. Our 13 full-time residential seminarians and many part-time distance learners are already being formed for evangelical outreach on the foundation of Scripture and confessions, prayer, service, and the full range of pastoral gifts, skills and practices. In an increasingly secular culture — a new missionary age — we can do no less.

Individuals and congregations can be part of the NALS mission of pastoral formation now with your prayers, your financial gifts, and encouraging future pastors to choose the North American Lutheran Seminary for their pastoral formation.

The NALC Executive Council has designated each May as "North American Lutheran Seminary Month." Please consider participating in seminary month in your congregation.

Gifts to support the seminary may be given online at www.thenalc.org or sent to North American Lutheran Church; PO Box 860565; Minneapolis, MN 55486-0565. Please make checks payable to North American Lutheran Church and indicate seminary on the memo line.



NALS

North American Lutheran Seminary

NALC income vs. expenses

And they all ate and were satisfied. And they took up twelve baskets full of the broken pieces left over. — Matthew 14:20

We appreciate that the people in the North American Lutheran Church want to be informed and receive clear, straightforward information when it comes to the finances of the church.

I also found this true when serving in congregations. Folks didn't want, or need, gimmicks or song and dance. They just wanted to know the facts about income and expenses, realistic needs and specific goals. They responded with faith and generosity, in response to God's love and the ministry we share.

This article is intended to share with you some realities about income and expenses in the NALC, realistic needs and goals. No gimmicks or song and dance. This will primarily be focused on our regular ministry income and expenses, with a little information about designated funds.

What is the simple, straightforward message? While we are in a strong financial position, our annual income is not meeting budgeted expenses.

At the most recent meeting of the NALC Living and Giving Stewardship Task Force, Ryan Schwarz, NALC treasurer, provided a summary based on 2017 giving. Most of this information is from Ryan's report and our financial office. What were some exciting and positive aspects of giving to the NALC in 2017?

First, income was significantly better than budget in most areas. We have seen solid growth in congregational benevolence which was up 7.8 percent compared to 2016, and 2.5 percent better than budget. This is significant and is cause for a hearty, "Thanks be to God — and to our congregations for their substantial increase in giving!"

There was also substantial growth in donations to the Great Commission Fund in 2017, up 60 percent over the prior year. This fund received much-needed replenishment.



Ministry Matters

Pastor David Wendel

Assistant to the Bishop
for Ministry and Ecumenism

The North American Lutheran Seminary and Theological Education Fund was boosted by a \$295,000 bequest and solid annual giving.

There were "extremely robust donations" to the Disaster Response Fund for hurricane relief, indicating great love, care and generosity in Christ's name to those who are experiencing tragedy and are in need.

With regard to income versus expenses for 2017, our operating deficit of \$89,000 was \$25,000 worse than 2016 but \$100,000 better than budget. This happy result was entirely due to actual income exceeding budget by more than \$100,000, giving us a much smaller deficit than was budgeted for the year.

In short, our balance sheet remains strong, with close to \$2.8 million of net cash, although unrestricted reserves were down to \$750,000, due to the 2017 operating deficit. These cash reserves are largely due to strong giving from congregations in the early years of the NALC and provide the funds needed to meet our deficits.

However, regardless of our designated and undesignated reserves, we are not meeting our annual budget. Giving is up, the deficit is less than approved by the Convocation, we have unrestricted cash reserves which help us to meet the deficit budget approved each year by the Convocation. As in congregations, using cash reserves to meet annual deficits is not a sustainable long-term strategy for the NALC.

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What have the deficits looked like the last several years? In the early years of the NALC, significant surpluses were the norm. In 2012, operating income greatly exceeded expenses, providing a surplus of more than \$420,000. For the next few years, the NALC operating budget was close to balanced with the help of some one-time gifts: in 2013, a surplus of \$12,000; in 2014, a deficit of \$22,000; and, in 2015, a deficit of just \$1,000.

Then, in 2016, the deficit expanded to \$64,000, partially due to the addition of staff to serve congregations in areas such as communications and youth ministry. As mentioned earlier, the deficit for 2017 expanded further to \$89,000. In both years, the deficit would have been much larger, but for certain large one-time gifts which were received in those years. The budgeted operating deficit for 2018 is close to \$145,000.

Since 2013, we will have used roughly \$309,000 from cash reserves to meet deficits. At this rate, cash reserves might last another four years. In any organization of our size, having no significant cash reserves is not in the best interest of the organization. While our intention is not to “make a profit,” most would agree reasonable cash reserves are necessary for long-term stability as well as for unexpected ministry expenses. Indeed, in the nonprofit sector generally, cash reserves equal to six months of total spending is a standard benchmark of financial responsibility. Rather than wait until cash reserves are used up by annual deficits, our hope is that you will appreciate having this information now.

The goal is not to sound an alarm or cause panic. In our Convocations, you have made it clear you want honest, clear, complete information regarding our financial situation. Bottom line, we are on solid, secure financial footing. Our congregations are generous, responsible and committed to the NALC, ready to respond when needed. In August 2016, when you were informed that giving to the NALC by congregations was far below the 5 to 8 percent which would meet all of our spending priorities, giving did indeed increase, helping us to reduce the budgeted deficit for 2017 by \$100,000, leaving a remaining deficit of \$89,000.

Now, we hope our congregations will respond again, over time, helping us to completely reduce the annual deficits as we seek to balance the NALC operating budget. The greatest expenses in the budget have to do with the annual Lutheran Week activities (which are subsidized annually by more than \$100,000) and staff compensation and benefits.

There is little discretionary spending in the NALC budget, although our Support Team is at work on the 2019 budget draft with an eye toward reducing expenses when reasonable and responsible to do so. We are committed to financially supporting missions in North America and around the world. We continue to support our seminarians preparing for ministry in the NALC, and we give thanks that we are able to provide support for many partners in mission and ministry. We want to continue this good work to the glory of God.

At the same time, we are considering important growth in the NALC structure to provide leadership, support and assistance that is sustainable long-term. We have called a part-time Director of Domestic Mission and filled the communication position that was previously held by Pastor Mark Ryman. These positions will address important needs in the NALC at all levels of our ministry. Needless to say, financial support is necessary and some of these ministry needs will not be able to be met so long as we continue with deficits.

In the Bible passage above, Matthew 14:20, the evangelist reminds us that, in spite of the great crowds that our Lord fed from the gift of five loaves and two fish, “all ate and were satisfied,” and still, “they took up twelve baskets full of the broken pieces left over.” The good news is that in God’s hands, even modest gifts and giving will be blessed and multiplied, satisfying every need. And there will be more left over!

Please take this information, pray about the need in the NALC and respond as God leads. Share it with your pastor or church council. Discuss the need at congregational meetings. Let us move our beloved NALC forward into balanced budgets, income meeting expenses, and funds “left over” for continued growth in mission and ministry in Christ’s name!

With God all things are possible. — Matthew 19:26



NALC

North American Lutheran Church

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