

NALC News

North American Lutheran Church

August 2018

NALC Convocation meets in Denver during Lutheran Week 2018

Nearly 600 delegates and visitors gathered Aug. 15-17 at the Crowne Plaza Denver Airport Convention Center in Denver, Colo., for the 2018 Convocation of the North American Lutheran Church around the theme, “The Holy Spirit: Calling, Gathering, Enlightening, Sanctifying.”

The Convocation is the annual meeting of the NALC. It is a time for church members to gather for inspiration, encouragement and business.

The Mission Festival began with a focus on discipleship. Featured speakers Sherry Anne Weddell and



Nearly 600 people attended the 2018 NALC Convocation in Denver, Colo.



Bishop John Bradosky presided at the Festival Eucharist. Pastor Ken Hohag, Lutheran Week Chaplain, served as assisting minister.

Katherine Coolidge of the Catherine of Siena Institute in Colorado Springs, Colo., talked about ways congregations can form intentional disciples.

The Mission Festival also featured a variety of breakout sessions to equip members for mission.

Pastor Gemechis Buba, Assistant to the Bishop for Missions, delivered a keynote address for the Mission Festival and offered a report to the Convocation in which he told inspiring stories of God’s work in providing buildings for some NALC mission congregations serving Oromo people.

The Convocation approved a \$2.1 million Operating Budget for the NALC for 2019. Budgets were also approved for NALC designated funds.

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Delegates elected members of the NALC Executive Council, Court of Adjudication, Canada Section Board of Directors and North American Lutheran Seminary Board of Regents.

Representatives of the Anglican Church in North America, Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, Lutheran Church—Canada and Lutheran Congregations in Mission for Christ brought greetings to the Convocation.

A resolution regarding ecumenical consultation between the NALC and the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops was approved unanimously. The resolution was proposed by the NALC's Commission on Theology and Doctrine. The resolution formally invites the Roman Catholic Church to "an intentional, focused consultation that will foster conversation and cooperation in all areas appropriate and possible but especially with regard to missionary discipleship, the promotion and defense of a biblical understanding of marriage, the sanctity of all human life, the confusion in our culture regarding gender and God's creation of humanity as male and female, and the defense and promotion of religious liberty."

Two new staff members — Andrew Fuller, Director of Communications, and Brad Hales, Director of Domestic Mission — gave reports on their work within the church. Reports of the work of the NALC's staff, teams, task forces and ministry partners were warmly received.



Pastor Patti Morlock (far left) led a Q&A panel session on discipleship with panelists (left to right) Katherine Coolidge, Sherry Anne Weddell, Valerie Hobbs, Bishop John Bradosky and Pastor David Wendel.



Katherine Coolidge (left) and Sherry Anne Weddell of the Catherine of Siena Institute addressed making intentional disciples.

The Life-to-Life Discipleship Team reported on its efforts to help make discipleship a central focus of pastoral and congregational ministry. A video presentation is now available on the NALC website. The team has worked with Sola Publishing to produce discipleship resources for congregations.

The Task Force on Structure recommended changes in NALC structure that may serve as a guide for Mission Districts and the new Bishop as they consider the best ways to structure the church for the sake of mission.

Mission Districts met on Wednesday evening for a time of study, discussion and business.

Stuff the Tonka Truck for NALC Disaster Response received more than \$11,000 worth of gift cards to assist those recovering from disasters. The effort was organized by the Women of the NALC.

Other events from Lutheran Week included the Braaten-Benne Lectures in Theology, Women of the NALC Annual Gathering (with keynote speaker Pastor Pamela Thorson), Life-to-Life Discipleship Coaching workshop and the Ventures in Youth Ministry Symposium (with keynote speaker Thomas O'Neill).

Documents, photos and videos from the Convocation and other events of Lutheran Week will be available online at www.lutheranweek.com.

NALC begins time of discernment and prayer prior to election of Bishop

Bishop John Bradosky announces that he will not seek re-election

Bishop John Bradosky has announced that he will not be seeking re-election as Bishop of the North American Lutheran Church when his term expires in 2019.

Bishop Bradosky addressed the transition at the 2018 NALC Convocation in Denver, Colo. He talked about “passing the baton” of the office of Bishop and pointed out the need for all of us to “pass the baton” of faith and discipleship.

To prepare for the nomination and election process for Bishop, the Executive Council provided a packet of information to the congregations represented at

the Convocation. The packet included a booklet of prayers encouraging NALC members to engage in a year of prayer and discernment leading up to the election at the 2019 NALC Convocation Aug. 7-9, 2019, in Indianapolis, Ind. The packets are being mailed to all congregations that did not pick one up in Denver.

Prayer in a Time of Discernment: A Resource for the Election of the Bishop of the North American Lutheran Church is available for download at www.thenalc.org. Other information about the election process is also available on the NALC website.

North American Lutheran Seminary to seek to call new president

The North American Lutheran Seminary will be seeking a new president.

The Rev. Dr. Amy Schifrin has been serving as both president and a faculty member since the seminary’s founding in 2014.

Dr. Schifrin will continue as full-time faculty for both the NALS and Trinity School for Ministry, which hosts the NALS Seminary Center. She will transition out of her position as NALS President after the 2018-2019 school year or when the next president is called.

We are thankful that the seminary has grown to a place where a full-time president and a full-time faculty member in pastoral theology are needed.



The Rev. Dr. Amy Schifrin, President of the North American Lutheran Seminary, speaks to the 2018 NALC Convocation while Marisa Crofts and Ryan Henkel, NALS staff, and the Rev. Aidan Smith of Trinity School for Ministry look on.

Convocation elects leaders for NALC

The 2018 NALC Convocation Aug. 15-17 in Denver, Colo., elected leaders for the North American Lutheran Church and the North American Lutheran Seminary.

Richard E. Jansak of Hendersonville, N.C., and Pastor Melinda H. Jones of Summerville, S.C. were elected to four-year terms on the NALC Executive Council. The Executive Council oversees operations of the NALC between Convocations.

Pastor Wendy Berthelsen of Midlothian, Texas; Pastor Dennis Di Mauro of Herndon, Va., and Pastor Phillip Gagnon of St. Albert, Alberta, were elected to six-year terms on the North American Lutheran Seminary Board of Regents.

James Gale of Washington, D.C., and Pastor John J. Moffett of Ashland, Ohio, were elected to the NALC Court of Adjudication.

Ralph Wold of Red Deer, Alberta, and Pastor Rolf Bjornstad of Sherwood Park, Alberta, were elected to four-year terms on the NALC Canada Section Board of Directors.



Richard Jansak



Melinda Jones



Wendy Berthelsen



Dennis Di Mauro



Phillip Gagnon



Rolf Bjornstad



Ralph Wold



James Gale



John Moffett

Convocation approves 2019 budgets

The 2018 NALC Convocation approved a \$2.1 million Operating Budget for the North American Lutheran Church for 2019.

Budgets were also approved for the church's designated funds: \$589,000 for the Theological Education Fund (which includes the North American Lutheran Seminary); \$175,500 for the Great Commission Fund; and \$89,000 for the Disaster Response Fund.

As a way of expanding the NALC's service to its congregations, most of the budgets anticipate spending some cash reserves — budgeting expenses greater than anticipated income.

“As the NALC completes its eighth year of existence, our church body remains on solid financial footing. Nonetheless, over the past few years, operating expenses have exceeded income. This is principally due to the addition of new resource persons to serve NALC congregations — domestic missions staff, a communications director and a youth and family ministry specialist, among others. While the NALC's operating budget is not

yet balanced, I am glad to report that significant progress has been made in reducing these deficits,” said Ryan Schwarz, NALC Treasurer.

In addition to benevolence giving through the NALC, congregations are encouraged to support at least one domestic and one global mission. The NALC encourages congregations to support local and global mission directly — giving to projects, missionaries and ministries rather than channeling that giving through the NALC offices.

The NALC Constitution asks the Executive Council to report to the annual Convocation the percentage of congregational giving required to fund the general budget. The council again reported that 5 to 8 percent of congregational income would be necessary to fund the Operating Budget.

A variety of financial reports are available on the NALC website including the treasurer's presentation at the Convocation, the 2019 budgets, the 2018 financial forecast and the audited financial statements from 2017 and previous years. You can find the reports at www.thenalc.org/financial-reports.

Congregational anniversaries

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125 years

Grace Lutheran Church
Pittsburgh, Pa.

St. Martin's Evangelical Lutheran Church
Maiden, N.C.

100 years

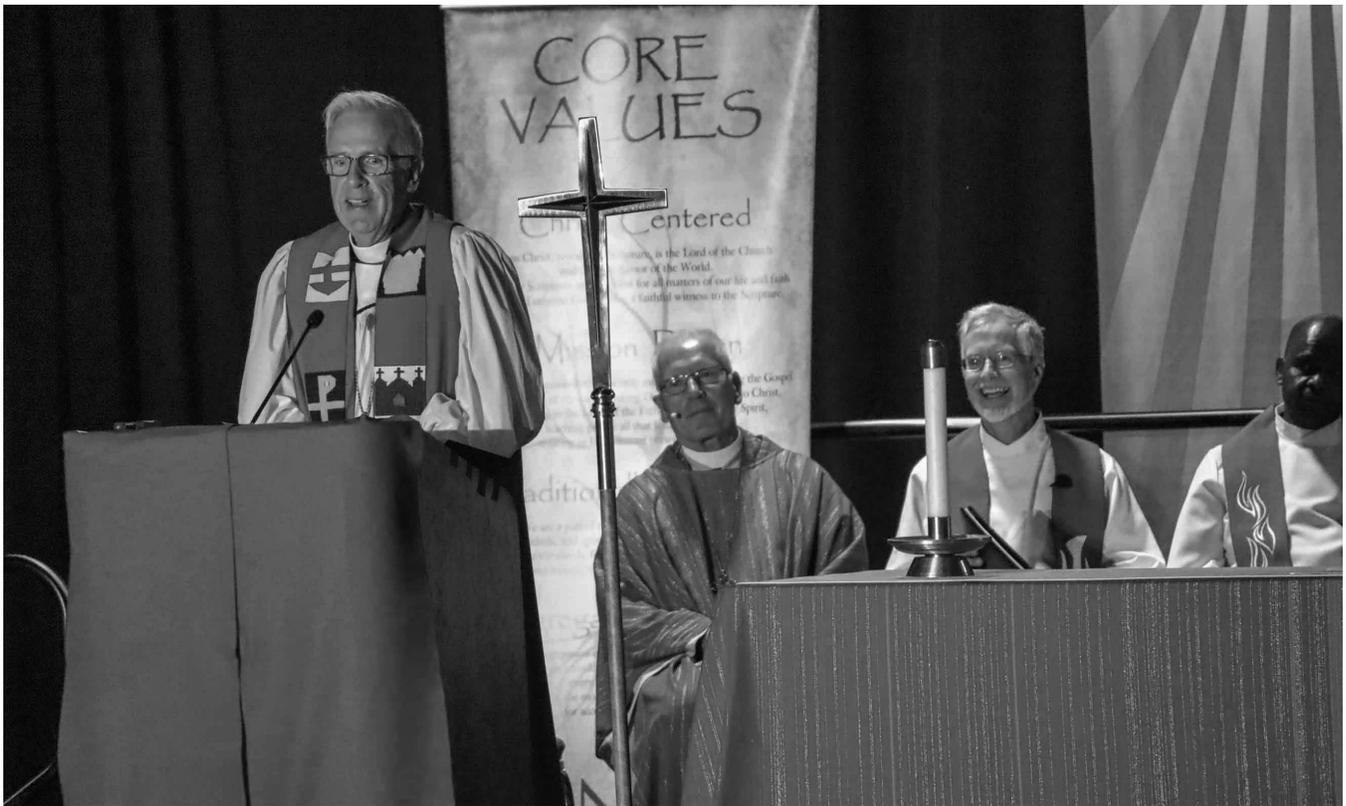
Bethlehem Lutheran Church of Dalum
Drumheller, Alberta

St. Paul Lutheran Church
Rosenberg, Texas



LUTHERAN WEEK 2018 THE HOLY SPIRIT

Calling | Gathering | Enlightening | Sanctifying



Bishop Charlie Masters of the Anglican Network in Canada, a diocese of the Anglican Church in North America, preached at the Thursday Festival Eucharist.



Leaders of the Festival Eucharist posed for a group photo. They are, from left, Pastor David Wendel, Assistant to the Bishop for Ministry and Ecumenism; Bishop John Bradosky; Pastor Tsena Dinssa of Christ the King Lutheran Church in Newcastle, Wyo.; Bishop Charlie Masters of the Anglican Network in Canada; Pastor Gemechis Buba, Assistant to the Bishop for Missions; Pastor Mark Chavez, NALC General Secretary; and Pastor Ken Hohag of Black Forest Lutheran Church in Colorado Springs, Colo., and Lutheran Week 2018 chaplain.



Newly elected leaders of the NALC, Women of the NALC and North American Lutheran Seminary were installed by Bishop Bradosky.



Pastor Gemechis Buba, Assistant to the Bishop for Missions, spoke at the Mission Festival.



James Puotyual, a new NALC Global Worker who will serve in South Sudan, was commissioned at the Convocation.



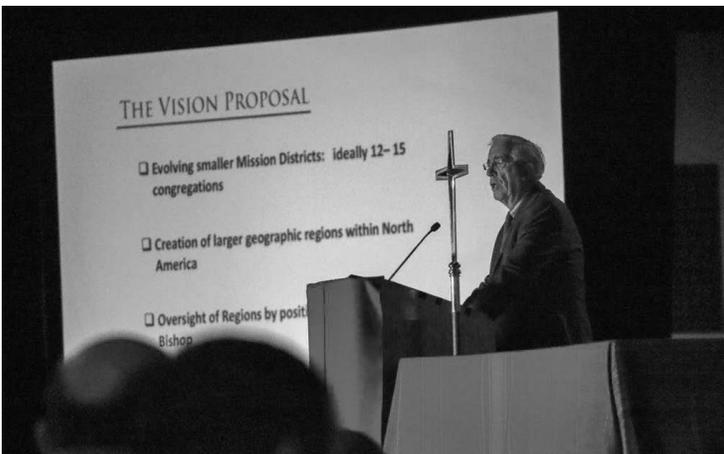
Pastor Brad Hales, Director of Domestic Mission, led a keynote Bible study.



Missie Bonser, Associate for Youth and Worship and Deacon at Trinity Lutheran Church in Monument, Colo., led musical worship throughout the week.



Besides the Service of the Word and Festival Eucharist, there were several other times of worship and prayers each day.



Brian Sutton, chair of the Task Force on Structure presented his report to the Convocation.



Lutheran Week was held at the Crowne Plaza Denver Airport Convention Center near the Denver airport.



Presenters for the Braaten-Benne Lectures in Theology were, from left, the Rev. Drs. Maurice Lee, Mark Mattes, Orrey McFarland, Kathryn Schifferdecker and Matthew Burdette.

Braaten-Benne Lectures in Theology

“The Person of the Holy Spirit” was the topic for the 2018 Carl E. Braaten and Robert D. Benne Lectures in Theology Aug. 14-15 in Denver, Colo.

Presentations for the annual theological conference included:

+ The Rev. Dr. Kathryn Schifferdecker - Scripture’s Witness to the Holy Spirit.

+ The Rev. Dr. Orrey McFarland - “The Lord is the Spirit”: The Person of the Holy Spirit in the Letters of Paul.

+ The Rev. Dr. Maurice Lee - Filioque Piety: The Holy Spirit in the Triune Life.

+ The Rev. Dr. Mark Mattes - The Holy Spirit in Luther’s Catechisms.

+ The Rev. Dr. Matthew Burdette - God is Free: Robert W. Jenson’s Doctrine of the Holy Spirit.

Video recordings of the lectures will be available on the Lutheran Week website.

Like previous Braaten-Benne Lectures, the 2018 lectures will be published in a book available from the American Lutheran Publicity Bureau at www.alpb.org.



More than 200 people attended the Braaten-Benne Lectures in Theology.



Discipleship Coaching Workshop offered by the NALC's Life-to-Life Discipleship Team.



Newly elected leaders of the Women of the NALC (from left): Rachel Busch Jones, Lane Magera, Jacqui El Torro, Jill Nesheim, Pat Dittrich, Jody Ford and Marcella Nelson.



Local volunteers served at the registration table throughout Lutheran Week.



Women of the NALC met for their Annual Gathering to encourage and learn from each other.



Pastor Will Hartfelder and Jacqui El Toro, leaders of the Lutheran Week Planning Team.



Ventures in Youth Ministry Symposium offered training and encouragement to youth leaders in congregations.

Report of Bishop to Convocation

Following are excerpts from Bishop John Bradosky's report to the NALC Convocation.

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

Our theme for this year's Lutheran Week is "The Holy Spirit: Calling, Gathering, Enlightening, Sanctifying."

Our text is Acts 1:8: "But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth."

Following his resurrection and prior to his ascension, Jesus manifests the work the Holy Spirit would continue to accomplish following Pentecost: calling, gathering, enlightening and sanctifying. During those 40 days, Jesus continued to "call" his disciples. On Pentecost there were not just the 11 disciples but a group of 120. Jesus "gathered" his followers together and presented himself to them with many "proofs" regarding his presence and power. Jesus "enlightened" them by continuing to speak about the Kingdom of God. He "sanctified" them by his presence and the promise of the Father in sending the Holy Spirit, commanding them to wait until they were baptized with the Holy Spirit.

As is often the case, the disciples want to know only about the difference this will make in their immediate context. They ask Jesus, "Is this when you will restore the kingdom to Israel?" Jesus reminds them that they can trust in the Father's perfect timing. He pulls them away from their self-centered focus to a larger view of the Kingdom Jesus proclaimed. He tells them "you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria and to the ends of the earth." This is not about passively waiting for the restoration of all things but of actively witnessing to the world. Between his incarnation and his return is the time for his Body, the Church, to witness to the world.

If you have created a "Last Will and Testament" in order to appropriately deal with your estate, the legacy you leave behind for others, you know that it must be signed by witnesses. Luther suggests that we are witnesses of Jesus' "Last Will and Testament." We are the witnesses of the legacy that he left behind for his Church to proclaim. Luther writes,



From the Bishop

Bishop John Bradosky

Therefore, let us follow Chrysostom, who, investigating the distinguishing features of a testament writes, "For a testament is made when the day of death is near. Moreover, such a testament regards some as heirs but disinherits others. Again, a testament contains certain provisions on the part of the one who makes it and certain requirements to be met by the heirs, so that they receive certain things and do certain things. Again, a testament must have witnesses." Let us look at these points in order. For Chrysostom says no more about the well-known fact that Christ made His testament when the day of His death was near. The evangelists, you see, relate unanimously that when Christ passed along the cup which had been blessed by Him, He said: "This cup is the new testament in My blood" (Luke 22:20), and this at the Last Supper. But Chrysostom also touches too briefly on why He made a testament, on what was to be received. This should have been discussed most of all. Therefore, one should know that He made a will and left immeasurable blessings, namely, the remission of sins and eternal life when He made His completely trustworthy testament. Matthew 26:28-29 contains the clearest statement of all. There He said: "For this is My blood of the new testament, which will be shed for many for the remission of sins. But I tell you I shall not drink again of this fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new with you in My Father's kingdom." With these most delightful words He bequeaths to us, not the riches or the glory of the world but once and for all absolutely all blessings, that is, as I have said, the remission of sins and possession of the future kingdom. ... The witnesses of this testament are the Holy Spirit Himself and the apostles, as John 15:26 states: "The Spirit of truth, who proceeds from the Father, He will bear witness concerning Me, and you will bear witness, because

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you have been with Me from the beginning.” Therefore, they said in Acts 3:15: “To this we are witnesses.” And in Acts 1:8 we read: “And you shall be My witnesses in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria and to the ends of the earth.” In steering the disciples away from times and dates, Jesus was not rejecting the restoration of Israel, but “depoliticizing” it with his call to worldwide mission. In some ways the disciples were to be the restored Israel, fulfilling its mission to be a light for the Gentiles so that God’s salvation would reach the ends of the earth.

In steering the disciples away from times and dates, Jesus was not rejecting the restoration of Israel, but “depoliticizing” it with his call to worldwide mission. In some ways the disciples were to be the restored Israel, fulfilling its mission to be a light for the Gentiles so that God’s salvation would reach the ends of the earth. The image and the words of the angels at the Ascension created a vivid picture of Jesus returning on the clouds just as they saw him ascend (Acts 1:11). The Parousia (second coming) is not abandoned, but the direction Christ has set to that day is the evangelization of the world, making disciples of all nations. To that end Jesus makes two critical promises: **“you will receive power”** and **“you will be my witnesses.”**

This power is not political power, or power derived from agreement on agendas. It is not the power of institutions or organizations. It is not personal power derived from what is within us. It is divine power that comes from the Holy Spirit. The word for “power” is the same word used in the Gospels to describe Jesus’ miracles. It is this power that is essential for being equipped for mission. Luke stresses this commission to be Christ’s witnesses at the end of his Gospel (Luke 24:47-49) and again in Acts 1:8. The disciples are to be his witnesses. It is as if we signed his “Last Will and Testament.” We have been entrusted with his estate, his legacy. We know the truth of his identity, the relational focus of his earthly ministry, the purpose of his sacrificial death and the hope of his glorious resurrection. We have already become heirs of his Kingdom through faith in him, trusting his promises. We are witnesses of the difference Jesus Christ has made in our lives, in the life of his Church and throughout the entire world for all time. The term for “witness” (martyr) is also appropriate. As death draws close we offer to the world our “Last Will and Testament.” What we have received in this life we pass on to others. We cling to only one possession —

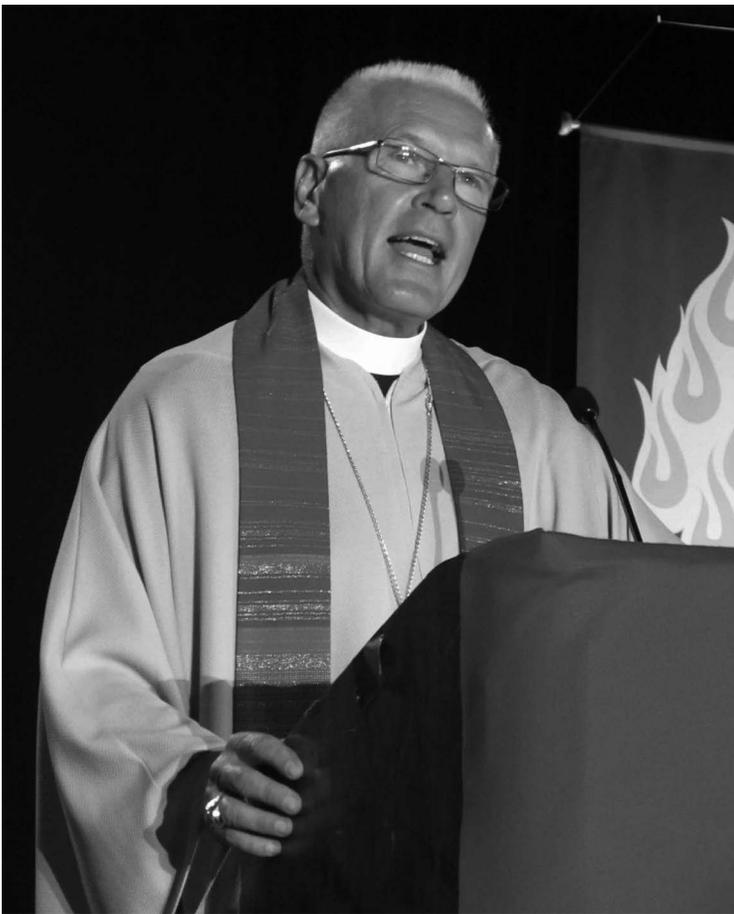
rather, to only one person — the Lord Jesus Christ. He is all we have and all we need. In him there is forgiveness, eternal life, unfathomable grace, love beyond measure, power, purpose and direction for living. He is our legacy and the only part of our estate that endures eternally. The gift we have received is the gift we pass on to others. This mission of being Christ’s witnesses is our daily endeavor and the nature of discipleship. It is clear from Scripture, the creeds and the confessions that no disciple can live faithfully apart from the power of the Holy Spirit.

Throughout our time together we will be remembering Luther’s explanation to the third article of the Apostles Creed.

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 person and work of the Holy Spirit is essential to understanding the fullness of the Trinitarian nature of the God we worship and adore, the One God revealed in Holy Scripture. Throughout my ministry I have noticed a distinct resistance among some Lutherans to acknowledge, accept and utilize the gifts the Holy Spirit provides for building up and strengthening the ministry of both the individual to whom such gifts are given and, through those individuals, the entire Church. While serving as an international speaker for Alpha, I received the same basic question from hundreds of Lutheran pastors. While they affirmed the Alpha program, they consistently asked, “What do you do with the Holy Spirit?” Some wanted me to write a Lutheran Alpha that deleted or mitigated the presentations on the Holy Spirit. I constantly encouraged them to read what Scripture says about the Holy Spirit and then to read our creeds and confessions. Some have accused Lutherans of being unitarians of the second person of the Trinity. Unfortunately, some among us have embraced such criticism as an accurate description of our Lutheran identity. To do so is to abandon Scripture as the norm

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Bishop Bradosky preaching at the NALC Convocation.

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for our faith and life and to undermine our confessions as “true witnesses and faithful expositions” of those Scriptures. The Holy Spirit is essential to our life and faith, and without that power there is no Body of Christ but only the empty shell of a human organization. When I asked pastors about their concerns and fears regarding the work of the Holy Spirit, their answers were nearly the same. **They feared no longer being in control.** I believe that is the best place for us to be, no longer trying to control the Holy Spirit by our structures but conforming our structures and our lives to his control. It is the only way to utilize the gifts he gives for reform and renewal in the Church.

Our life in Christ begins in Baptism. We acknowledge that by water and the Holy Spirit we are made members of the Church, the body of Christ. We affirm that it is the same Holy Spirit that moved over the waters at creation. It is by the same Holy Spirit that a person is given new life through the waters of Baptism and made an inheritor of God’s glorious kingdom. We confess our faith in the Holy Spirit in the Apostles’ Creed. We baptize the person in the name of the

Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. We pray, “Pour your Holy Spirit upon this child: The spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and the fear of the Lord, the spirit of joy in your presence.” We anoint the child with oil, making the sign of the cross and saying, “Child of God, you have been sealed by the Holy Spirit and marked with the cross of Christ forever.”

I find it interesting that Luther’s original order for Holy Baptism (1523) included even more powerful expressions of the work of the Holy Spirit. One striking feature is the number of exorcisms and references to the work of the devil. The pastor began the baptismal liturgy by blowing three times under the child’s eyes saying, “Depart thou unclean spirit and give room to the Holy Spirit.” The opening prayer implores that God would “break all the snares of the devil with which he is bound.” Luther’s prayer added, “I adjure thee, thou unclean spirit, by the name of the + Father and of the + Son and of the + Holy Ghost that thou come out and depart from this servant of God, (Name), for he commands thee, thou miserable one, he who walked upon the sea and stretched forth his hand to sinking Peter.” In his preface to this order for Baptism, Luther emphasized the seriousness of the exorcisms, “Remember, therefore, that it is no joke to take sides against the devil and not only to drive him away from the little child, but to burden the child with such a mighty and lifelong enemy.” In a worldview that understands the presence and power of the devil, one can easily grasp the importance of being equipped and empowered by the Holy Spirit. In a world that refuses to acknowledge the presence and power of evil it is easy to see why many today undervalue the power and work of the Holy Spirit.

We affirm the work of the Holy Spirit during confirmation, ordination, every invocation and benediction, every order for confession and absolution. Our life in Christ is bathed and sustained by that same Holy Spirit. More than a name, the Holy Spirit is the person of God who is active, moving, filling and renewing the Body of Christ: calling, gathering, enlightening, sanctifying. It is my prayer that during our time together in this Lutheran Week 2018 and beyond we will be filled with more than ideas and theological concepts about the Holy Spirit. I pray that you will receive his power and will be Christ’s witnesses. In and through the Holy Spirit, Jesus fulfills his promise, “I am with you always, to the close of the age.” Empowered by the Holy Spirit we press on.

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I have witnessed the work of the Holy Spirit in the lives of the individuals who are part of our NALC Life-to-Life Discipleship Team. That same Holy Spirit has been manifest in our meetings together throughout this year. Our Life-to-Life Discipleship Team recognizes that discipleship is not something new, but involves taking seriously what we already claim we believe. We must explore it at deeper levels of understanding and implement it in our own lives so that we become equipped — through the power of the Holy Spirit — to proclaim this faith in word and deed, disciple others and prepare them to become disciple-makers. I am especially grateful for the excellent leadership of Pastor Eric Riesen, the chair of the Life-to-Life Discipleship Team, in working with our pastors and theologians. We are making excellent progress. Increasing numbers of congregation are beginning the process. Pastors are signing up for coaching. We are training our own shepherds (coaches). Our cultural identity is reaching the “tipping point” of fully integrating discipleship into the fabric of our mission, ministry, the training of our pastors and the equipping of our laity. I commend to you their new PowerPoint presentation on this topic.

In a recent presentation to both the Life-to-Life Discipleship Team, as well as the Carolinas Mission District Convocation, I spoke about the dangers of discipleship that is focused on ourselves and our own progress in the faith without manifesting Christ’s love for others. It is a form of self-deception to believe that we can grow closer to Christ by improving our lives and gaining an artificial form of spiritual superiority. Instead, discipleship is a process of discovering how close and readily available Christ already is. We cannot get any closer to him than he has already come to us! This truth we celebrate weekly in the Eucharist. While pointing out several other dangers, as well as positive suggestions, I concluded with these words: **The greatest danger of all is to do nothing about discipleship.** To make that choice is to live in direct disobedience to Jesus’ command to go and make disciples of all nations... (Matthew 28). The greatest danger for the entire Body of Christ is to know what Jesus taught and modeled and then refuse to act. This is to live a self-centered life, relying on our own wisdom and attempts at self-justification through a variety of means but not his grace, no matter how many times we utter the word.

Please give up on this notion that pursuing discipleship will cause a divide between an “inner group” and an

“outer group.” Every congregation has been accused and convicted of having an inner group that causes others to feel like outsiders. Who is closest to the pastor or the council? That is the inner group because people believe that they are the ones who possess power and authority. It could be the choir, worship and music committee, executive council, small group or any number of other groups depending on the nature of the congregation’s history.

When the mother of James and John asks Jesus to give her sons special status to sit on either side of Jesus’ throne in heaven, Jesus uses it as an opportunity to remind them that life in Christ is about serving others and giving one’s life, even to the point of death, loving others for the sake of his Kingdom. We must learn that same lesson, for that is the true nature of discipleship! The greatest danger of all is doing nothing!

The Holy Spirit provides the connective tissue for the Body of Christ, and I am blessed by the inspiration and wisdom of other faithful leaders through whom the Holy Spirit has continued to bless and guide my ministry this past year. Foremost among them is Bishop Paull Spring. In addition to his treasured friendship and willingness to work through difficult issues by my side, he serves on the Commission for Theology and Doctrine as well as the Board of Regents for the NALS. I am also thankful for the faithful service and expertise of Bishop Ralph Kempksi.

The Holy Spirit has also been manifest in this church through the lives of our staff who serve so closely, addressing the needs of countless pastors, laity and congregations throughout the year. They have been using their spiritual gifts to build up and strengthen this Church daily. They are deserving of your appreciation and encouragement. Please pray for them as I do.

Your Executive Council has also trusted the Holy Spirit to lead and guide them throughout our meetings this year. Along with providing oversight and strategic direction for the entire North American Lutheran Church, they continue to read, study and grow in their faith and encourage our pastors and laity by their own example. They give graciously of their time and commitment to serve Christ. Our witness is stronger because of their service that keeps us moving forward faithfully and efficiently between our Convocations.

The office of the Bishop can only be implemented across the NALC through the work of our Mission

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District deans. The level of creative and responsive leadership from our deans this past year has been amazing to behold. There are countless stories to be told regarding the growing commitment of our deans to lead their pastors and congregations in pursuing Christ's mission. They have demonstrated their willingness to work cooperatively and are fully supportive of our work in the areas of discipleship, the Structure Task Force and the Vision for Pastors of the North American Lutheran Church. The Holy Spirit has not only been present when we gather together but throughout the year in every one of our Mission Districts. I am deeply grateful to the deans' congregations, who graciously provide them with the necessary time and opportunity to fulfill this important office. I am also especially thankful for the leadership of Pastor Dan Powell, the Convener and hub for communication for our deans. Please pray for them even as they offer themselves in ministry for our pastors and congregations in each of their respective Mission Districts.

That same Holy Spirit is also at work in the North American Lutheran Seminary (NALS). He has been at work calling people to Word and Sacrament ministry. Our students are amazingly gifted by the Holy Spirit and are part of a community of faith shaped by the Holy Spirit. The inspiration of our NALS President, faculty and staff continues to prepare our students for effective ministry in this church. Each of us has a part to play in listening carefully to the prompting of the Holy Spirit to encourage many others to pursue this important life of serving Christ in Word and Sacrament ministry. At every opportunity, I remind our people that our pastors will come from our congregations. Pray for the Holy Spirit to be at work in your congregation and offer those words of encouragement as he guides you. In addition to our faculty and staff, I am grateful for the gifted leadership of our Board of Regents. Please pray for all of them, giving thanks for their faithful service.

Throughout this year others have been guided by the Holy Spirit to use their spiritual gifts serving on our committees, task forces and commissions. Their work is helping us to advance our strategic objectives, supporting and strengthening the ministry of our congregations and pastors. Our strength is in the power of the Holy Spirit at work in the life of every disciple of Jesus who is a part of the North American Lutheran Church.

Many have already heard me express it, but it is time to make it official: I will not seek nomination for another term to serve as your Bishop. With this Convocation I begin my final year in this office. Next year, you will be electing a new Bishop to serve you as we move forward. While I must admit that I am wrestling with my own grief as this chapter in my ministry concludes, I also believe this is the best decision for me and, of even greater importance, the best decision for the North American Lutheran Church. We are too young a church body to have a leader serve in this position for 12 years. Eight years is long enough. We must convince ourselves of our capacity to elect from within this body the next Bishop to continue to lead us into that future. I am convinced that the Holy Spirit will inspire, encourage and call our next Bishop. A team of leaders from within our Executive Council will be providing you with materials encouraging you to pray for that process throughout this year, so that we will be truly prepared for the election next August.

Because your attention will be appropriately focused on your new Bishop next year, and my report will seem far less important, I want to use this opportunity to express my sincere thanks and deep appreciation for the honor you have bestowed upon me to serve as your Bishop. While the travel schedule can be overwhelming and exhausting, I love you, the people I am privileged to visit. Because of our time together, the unity of our faith, our mutual commitment to mission and ministry, and the bonds of love we share in Christ Jesus, I am always encouraged, strengthened and renewed. While it will be different as I depart from this office, serving as your Bishop and forming relationships with you over these past eight years are gifts that I will treasure for the rest of my life. When I am privileged to represent you in the presence of other church bodies and organizations, I do so with both pride and joy in serving as your Bishop. Your witness continues to bring encouragement to many more people than you may ever see or know. Be assured of my continued prayers for each of our pastors and congregations far beyond the end of my term.

As I pray for you, I am grateful for your prayers and even more grateful for God's faithful answer to your petitions on my behalf. I depend on his response. May his Holy Spirit continue to call, gather, enlighten and sanctify us on this journey of following Christ Jesus.

It is good to be with you following Him,

Bishop John Bradosky

Anniversaries recognized at Convocation

Ordination Anniversaries

65 years

Pastor Carlos Maestre
Pastor Robert W. Pflueger

60 years

Pastor Ronald L. Deck
Pastor William Ernest Flath
Pastor Eugene A. Lehrke
Pastor Paul G. Senff

55 years

Bishop Ralph A. Kempfski
Pastor M. L. Jacobson
Pastor William H. Breen

50 years

Pastor Larry Wayne Bost
Pastor James Marvin Glesne
Pastor John E. Jackson
Pastor Robert Douglas Kitchen
Pastor John Paul Lingle
Pastor Richard G. Mahan
Pastor Hans Scherner

45 years

Pastor Donald R. Bachman Jr.
Pastor Thomas W. Corbell
Pastor Lawrence M. Guenzel
Pastor John D. Hopper
Pastor Ivan Philip Nordstrand Jr.
Pastor Richard V. Pearson
Pastor Kenneth A. Tubbesing
Pastor Ronald A. Voss

40 years

Pastor Donald Roger Allman
Pastor Timothy L. Anderson
Bishop John F. Bradosky
Pastor Clyde Elliott
Pastor Raymond Lee Hagan
Pastor Timothy Earl Johnson
Pastor Robert Palan
Pastor M. Henry Pawluk
Pastor John H. G. Rasmussen
Pastor Thomas E. Reiff
Pastor Ronald R. Walter

35 years

Pastor Robert Keith Deobald
Pastor Kebede F. Dibaba
Pastor Mark C. Dill
Pastor Timothy A. Duesenberg
Pastor Karl H. Faltin
Pastor Mark Andrew Graham
Pastor Melvin G. Harris
Pastor David Bruce Hill
Pastor Ronald A. Hoyum
Pastor Frederick W. Meuter III
Pastor Robert W. Carlson Jr.
Pastor Barry S. Kendall
Pastor Gerald M. Merkouris
Pastor Martin Dennis Moore
Pastor Steven John Nicolai
Pastor Ronald J. Rasmussen
Pastor David E. Schafer
Pastor Stephen E. Seibel
Pastor Donna Hacker Smith
Pastor David L. Steffenson

30 years

Pastor Jesse J. Abbott
Pastor Joel Jay Berthelsen
Pastor Kent Thomas Groethe
Pastor Mark A. Hoffman
Pastor Jimalee Jones
Pastor Larry A. Nichols Jr.
Pastor Tamara J. K. Keen
Pastor Mark W. Knappe
Pastor Lauren R. Ley
Pastor Timothy Nappé
Pastor David Priem
Pastor Stephen Rhodes
Pastor Sara Ruth Sorensen
Pastor Terrill Galen Sorensen
Pastor Gary A. Veit
Pastor Robert Vitek
Pastor N. Craig Werling
Pastor Janine Gale Rew-Werling
Pastor Frezil Westerlund

25 years

Pastor Craig K. Abee
Pastor Aaron D. Albrecht
Pastor Jose A. Galvez
Pastor Seth J. Jersild
Pastor Karl Johnsen
Pastor Jeffrey Milsten
Pastor Jeffrey Todd Nellerroe

Pastor H. Ray Ramsburg
Pastor Dennis G. Reich
Pastor Jack L. Shannon

20 years

Pastor Robert Vernon Alle
Pastor Gaylon G. Botten
Pastor David H. Brooks
Pastor Bradley Everett
Pastor David Klappenbach
Pastor Jon M. Paquette
Pastor Clint Pluenneke
Pastor Dieter W. Punt
Pastor Martha Ramey
Pastor Charles N. Weaver
Pastor Mark A. Werner

Congregational Anniversaries

275 years

Christ Evangelical Lutheran Church
Womelsdorf, Pa.

225 years

St. John's Evangelical Lutheran
Church
Birdsboro, Pa.

200 years

Word of Life Lutheran Church
Edison, Ohio

St. Paul Lutheran Church
New Stanton, Pa.

St. John's Lutheran Church
Mount Gilead, Ohio

175 years

St. Paul Lutheran Church
Bolivar, Ohio

150 years

St. John's Lutheran Church of
Nekimi
Oshkosh, Wis.

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Christ Centered + Mission Driven + Traditionally Grounded + Congregationally Focused

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NALC News

Published by

North American Lutheran Church

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New Brighton, MN 55112-2202

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