



ONLINE MISSION CONVOCATION ENDORSES 2020 VISION FOR NALC

"A 2020 Vision for the North American Lutheran Church" was endorsed by the 2020 NALC Mission Convocation.

The Rev. Dr. Dan Selbo, NALC bishop, presented the 10-point vision to the convocation which met online Aug. 7-8.

"The title itself — a 2020 Vision — is a little bit of a play on words. I'm playing with the fact that we're in the year 2020 ... It's also as clear a vision as we currently have — 20-20 — for where we believe God is leading," Bishop Selbo said.

"The rationale for this vision perhaps goes unsaid, but I believe it's worth saying: 'Unless the Lord builds the house, those who built it labor in vain.' We are trusting that this vision is not simply of our making but one that is given to us by God. And 'without a vision the people perish.' That's a paraphrase of one of the passages of Scripture. But it's true. We need direction if we're going to survive and move forward and grow. A vision is crucial."

"It is not my desire to move us in any new and radical directions ... It is my desire to keep us moving. And if we don't know where we're going, it's going to be hard to get there," Bishop Selbo said.

The convocation approved a resolution endorsing "the direction that the 2020 Vision sets for the entire NALC for the next four years." The resolution also asks the NALC "to commit to fervent daily prayer and action for the 2020 Vision to come to life in and



Bishop Dan Selbo leads the online 2020 NALC Mission Convocation from a video studio at Trinity School for Ministry in Ambridge, Pennsylvania.

among us" and "to encourage collaboration of all disciples, congregations and entities of the NALC in implementing Vision 2020."

The resolution calls for annual reports and "frequent updates on how the 2020 Vision is coming to life in individual discipleship, congregational renewal, mission district initiatives, with our mission partners,

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global and ecumenical partners, and throughout this church body.”

The 10 points of the vision are listed in the box on Page 3 of the NALC News. For more information on the 2020 Vision and the details of each point of the vision, please go to thenalc.org/vision.

The 2020 NALC Mission Convocation was held online because of health concerns resulting from the coronavirus pandemic.

The convocation met online in two sessions, Aug. 7-8. Each day began with a devotional message on the theme from Ephesians 3:20-21. Bishop Selbo began the convocation on Friday and the Rev. Dr.



The Rev. Mark Chavez, NALC general secretary, speaks during the 2020 NALC Mission Convocation as the Rev. Andrew Ames Fuller, NALC communications director, looks on.

Gemechis Buba, assistant to the bishop for missions, began Saturday’s session.

There were 267 lay delegates, 300 clergy delegates and 217 visitors registered for the convocation.

The convocation was live streamed from the Trinity School for Ministry campus in Ambridge, Pennsylvania, where the Seminary Center of the North American Lutheran Seminary is located.

“This will go down as the best online convocation we have had over our 10 years of history. I think that’s wonderful. It may also go down, and probably will, as the worst online convocation we have had in our 10 years of history. Either way, it’s all good,” Bishop Selbo said.

The best was evident in the possibility of NALC members from across North America meeting together using online communication tools.

The worst manifested itself in technical difficulties that made it difficult for some delegates to be heard and in the difficulty of estimating the time the convocation would take. Each online vote took between five and 15 minutes. The Saturday session lasted three hours longer than planned.

In addition to presenting the 2020 Vision, Bishop Selbo gave a report of his first year as bishop.



NALC staff work behind the scenes to make the online 2020 NALC Mission Convocation happen.

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Those who were involved with the 2020 NALC Mission Convocation at the studio at Trinity School for Ministry in Ambridge, Pennsylvania, pose for a group photo.

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The online convocation heard reports — both live and prerecorded — from NALC ministries including Youth and Family Ministry, Life-to-Life Discipleship, Living and Giving Stewardship Team, NALC Life Ministries, Women of the NALC, NALC Disaster Response and Missions.

Significant anniversaries of ordination and of the founding of congregations were recognized. The convocation also recognized newly ordained pastors and students in the NALC’s candidacy process. Chaplains were also recognized.

The convocation received the treasurer’s report and approved budgets for the NALC Operating Fund, Theological Education Fund, Great Commission Fund and Disaster Response Fund.

All reports and documents for the convocation are available online at lutheranweek.com. Many items are available that were not able to be shared during the limited time available for the convocation.

Video recordings of the convocation are also posted on the website.

Lutheran Week 2021 is scheduled for Aug. 2-6 in Corpus Christi, Texas. The 2021 NALC Mission Convocation is Aug. 4-6.

NALC 2020 VISION: A 10-POINT PLAN

1. A church body committed to developing disciple-making congregations and cultures.
2. A body of believers committed to increasing our mission outreach and congregational multiplication efforts.
3. A denomination in which every congregation receives regular and consistent pastoral support.
4. A continuing education emphasis that supports the ongoing development of all NALC pastors and lay leaders.
5. A strategy for continental restructuring that is able to expand with denominational growth.
6. A denomination with the strongest and most highly respected Lutheran seminary training system in North America.
7. A communications strategy focused on forming identity, unity and testimony across our church body.
8. A denomination in which our international and ecumenical relationships strengthen our shared commitment to the Great Commission, the Great Commandments and the Church catholic, and which enhance our partnership on the congregational level.
9. A church body with the financial strength to support its God-given vision.
10. A Strategic Planning Team (SPT) that continually prays for and works to develop the next steps for our God-given vision and future.

For more information on the 2020 Vision and the details of each point of the vision, please go to thenalc.org/vision.

EXECUTIVE COUNCIL, COURT OF ADJUDICATION, BOARD OF REGENTS MEMBERS ELECTED

The 2020 NALC Mission Convocation elected members of the Executive Council and Court of Adjudication of the North American Lutheran Church and the Board of Regents of the North American Lutheran Seminary (NALS).

Lynn Kickingbird, a member of Peace Lutheran Church in Edmond, Oklahoma, and the Rev. Carl Rasmussen of First Lutheran Church in Kirkland, Illinois, were elected to four-year terms on the NALC Executive Council.

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

Samuel Duncomb, a member of Peace Lutheran Church in Northwood, Iowa, was elected to a four-year term on the NALC Court of Adjudication.

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

The Rev. Dr. Paul Krueger of First Lutheran Church in Washburn, North Dakota; the Rev. James Lehmann of Immanuel Lutheran Church in Thomasboro, Illinois; and the Rev. Dr. Eric Waters of St. John Lutheran Church in Boerne, Texas, were



Lynn Kickingbird



Carl Rasmussen



Samuel Duncomb



Paul Krueger



James Lehmann



Eric Waters

elected to six-year terms on the NALS Board of Regents.

The Board of Regents oversees the operation of the seminary.

The convocation also ratified the appointment of the Nominating Committee for 2021 by the Executive Council.

CONVOCAATION VOTES TO MOVE TO BIENNIAL CONVOCAATIONS

AMENDMENTS MUST BE RATIFIED BY CONGREGATIONS

The 2020 NALC Mission Convocation approved proposed amendments to the NALC Constitution that will move the North American Lutheran Church from meeting annually for its convocation to meeting every other year.

The convocation voted to add language to the proposed amendments asking the NALC Executive Council to provide quarterly updates to pastors and congregations.

The convocation also approved a proposed amendment to clarify the process by which the Executive Council apportions additional lay delegates to the convocation so that there is approximately an equal number of lay and clergy delegates.

Amendments approved by the convocation must be ratified within six months of the conclusion of the convocation by a two-thirds majority of NALC congregations voting on the amendments. At least half of NALC congregations must vote on whether or not to ratify the amendments for the ratification vote to be valid. Information on the ratification process will be available soon. It will be emailed to congregations and available on the NALC website.

The proposed amendments are available online at thenalc.org/2020proposedamendments.

The Executive Council approved the proposed amendments in April. The council proposed the shift to biennial convocations to be able to focus the time and resources of NALC staff, mission districts and congregations on achieving the NALC's 2020 Vision goals for renewal and growth.

Annual convocations create substantial expenses each year both for congregations and for the NALC Operating Budget. Congregations incur both registration and travel expenses to send delegates.

The NALC has significant costs in planning a convocation and subsidizing registration fees.

The constitution mentions "annual" convocations in many places, so many of the proposed amendments delete the word "annual." The word "annual" is sometimes replaced with the word "biennial."

The constitution will continue to allow "special convocations" to be called if necessary. A special convocation could be called if an additional meeting of the NALC were needed at any time.

The election cycle for members of the Executive Council and Court of Adjudication is tied to annual convocations, so there are proposed amendments to add flexibility to elections.

The constitution currently states that congregations receive additional lay delegates for every 750 baptized members and then states: "In the event that the total number of lay delegates elected pursuant to the preceding sentence is less than the total number of ordained ministers, the Executive Council shall apportion additional lay delegates based on the relative size of the congregations of the NALC."

Rather than set a specific number in the constitution, the proposed amendment states that "the Executive Council shall apportion additional lay delegates based on the baptized membership of congregations so there is approximately an equal number of lay and clergy delegates to the Convocation."

A proposed amendment to add the term "Mission Districts" to constitutional language referring to regional subdivisions of the NALC was postponed to the 2021 NALC Convocation to allow for consideration of the best constitutional language to include Mission Regions being formed in some areas prior to making the constitutional change.

2020 VISION FOR NALC

We have now completed our annual convocation. It was my first convocation since becoming bishop and the first online convocation we have had in our 10 years together. It was different, insofar as we were not able to be together in person. It was unique, insofar as we had never experienced an online convocation before. And it was significant, insofar as we endorsed a 2020 Vision that will set direction for our shared work in the next few years.

As I have been reflecting on the discussion and decisions of the convocation and as I have been praying about what is in front of us and where the Holy Spirit is leading, I could not help but remember and give thanks for the history we share as a denomination and for the opportunities that are, as a result, in front of us in the coming years.

If you know the history, as I shared at the convocation in my opening devotion, the North American Lutheran Church came into being on August 27, 2010, in Grove City, Ohio, at a gathering organized by the church reforming movement Lutheran CORE.

At the time, 17 congregations had signed on to become part of this new church body. Since then, the NALC has grown to become a body of believers made up of more than 440 congregations and more than 150,000 Lutherans from across North America.

Looking back on our history, there is no question that we are a church that has been blessed. The vision our leaders had at the time was that one day the NALC would grow to become more than 100 congregations strong. Thankfully, as we remembered and celebrated during this year's convocation, God's vision for us is, and has been, and will always be much greater than the one we have for ourselves.

Our 10 years of history provide a good reminder of, and a powerful witness to, the fact that God "is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us" (Ephesians 3:20 NIV).



FROM THE BISHOP

REV. DR. DAN SELBO
BISHOP

Those same 10 years also provide a good perspective and lens from which we can look to the future and through which we can begin to envision what lies ahead.

I was encouraged by the resolution that was made at the convocation that offered support for the 2020 Vision. I was even more encouraged by the overwhelming support that came as a result of the convocation's action and vote. Three commitments were made by the more than 400 delegates in attendance.

1. To endorse, with great thanksgiving, the direction that the 2020 Vision sets for the entire NALC for the next four years;
2. To commit to fervent daily prayer and action for the 2020 Vision to come to life in and among us;
3. To encourage collaboration of all disciples, congregations, and entities of the NALC in implementing Vision 2020.

The resolution closed with a call for reports on the progress of the 2020 Vision to be provided annually and for regular updates on where and how it is coming to life within our church body.

Without going into the specifics, the 10 components of the vision are aggressive. Even though they do not offer a new direction for our future — they continue

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to build upon our Core Values and the Great Commission and Great Commandments of our Lord — they do, nonetheless, challenge us to move into the future in new ways, building upon where we have been and reaching farther than we ever have before.

Having now served in the ministry for more than 34 years, I know full well that none of us can predict, let alone control, the future. The current global virus is a case in point. I have also learned that even our best laid plans do not always play out as planned. What we envision for our future will not always align with what ends up happening in real life.

At the same time, if we do not set a direction for where we are going and allow ourselves to be pushed and stretched and, ultimately, led and shaped by God, then whatever plans we might have had and put into place, will never come close to what God might have otherwise done and worked in and through us.

As I shared in my closing devotion for the convocation, this 2020 Vision will go nowhere if God is not in it and behind it and working through it. It is all for naught if our work and our witness are not centered

in Him. But if it is, which it is, and when we are, which we are, that is when God’s vision for our future — and where and how we will be used by and for Him — is “immeasurably more” than any vision we might come up with by ourselves.

The apostle Paul prayed that prayer for the believers in Ephesus. He prayed that prayer that they would come to know and experience the “immeasurably more” and greater “fullness of God.” As your bishop, in casting a vision for our future, I ask you to join with me in praying that same prayer for us.

We are 10 years into it as a church body. We are one decade further along than we were when this all started. But we are not even close to where God can take us, and we have only begun to see just a glimpse of what He has promised and prepared for us in Christ.

Thank you for your partnership in the Gospel, for your ongoing support, commitment and prayer, and for the work you do in your lives, and in and through your congregations to bear witness to the saving and life-giving message of Christ.

Bishop Dan

CONGREGATIONAL ANNIVERSARIES

These significant congregational anniversaries were recognized at the 2020 NALC Mission Convocation.

We thank God for the faithful ministry of these congregations.

275 Years - 1745

Organ Lutheran Church
Salisbury, North Carolina

200 Years - 1820

Emmanuel Lutheran Church
Export, Pennsylvania

150 Years - 1870

Trinity Lutheran Church
Abilene, Kansas

Marion Lutheran Church
Saint Olaf, Iowa

St. Paul Lutheran Church
Clyde, Ohio

Franklin Lutheran Church
Westby, Wisconsin

125 Years - 1895

St. John Lutheran Church
Palmer, Iowa

100 Years - 1920

First Evangelical Lutheran Church
Manchester, Iowa

Trinity Lutheran Church
Monroe, Ohio

Trinity Evangelical Lutheran Church
Lewiston, Idaho

Our Savior’s Lutheran Church
Menno, South Dakota



The Rev. Christopher M. Boyd was ordained Aug. 2 at St. Jacob Lutheran Church in Miamisburg, Ohio. He is called to serve as pastor of Resurrection Lutheran Church in Port Clinton, Ohio.

ORDINATIONS



The Rev. Ryan M. Henkel was ordained May 17 at Immanuel Lutheran Church of Flatville in Thomasboro, Illinois. He is called to serve as pastor of Emmons Lutheran Church in Emmons, Minnesota.



The Rev. Erik Neil Osness was ordained July 26 at St. Albert Evangelical Lutheran Church in St. Albert, Alberta. He is called to serve Hope Lutheran Church in Edmonton, Alberta.



The Rev. Matthew Clark Knuppel was ordained June 14 at Grace Lutheran Church in Advance, North Carolina, where he is called to serve as pastor.



The Rev. Logan Lee Wilmoth was ordained Feb. 9 at Joy Lutheran Church in Richmond, Texas. He is called to serve as pastor of Emmanuel Lutheran Church in State College, Pennsylvania.

NALC DISASTER RESPONSE UPDATE

NALC Disaster Response is responding to Hurricane Isaias in North Carolina. We are on Oak Island, helping a local homeowner whose home was knocked off its foundation by tidal surge. He had open heart surgery just three weeks prior to Hurricane Isaias. Thank you, Jesus, for volunteers!

NALC Disaster Response and Pastor Ron Voss from Servants of Christ Lutheran Church in Robins, Iowa, are reaching out to the Cedar Rapids, Iowa, area in support after the recent derecho — huge windstorm.

For more information or to schedule a volunteer team, please contact Mary Bates, NALC Disaster Response coordinator, at 740-509-1132 or disasterresponse@thenalc.org.

Many communities in Iowa are devastated by hurricane strength winds. Prayers and support are needed.

If your congregation, women's group and Sunday schools have emergency relief items to donate, please contact Mary to schedule a "Stuff the Truck" event. See thenalc.org/disasterresponse for the lists of quilts, Bibles, flood buckets, and kits that are needed.

Monetary donations to NALC Disaster Response may be given online at thenalc.org/donate or mailed to NALC Disaster Response; 2299 Palmer Drive, Suite 220; New Brighton, MN 55112.

ORDINATIONS

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The Rev. Richard G. Maxson was ordained Sept. 21 at Black Forest Lutheran Church in Colorado Springs, Colorado. He is called to serve as pastor of Granum Lutheran Church in Granum, Alberta.



The Rev. Andrew David Loomis was ordained Jan. 19 at Zion Lutheran Church in Ruthven, Iowa. He is called to serve as pastor of Immanuel Lutheran Church in Sumter, South Carolina.



The Rev. Benjamin C. Wyatt was ordained Nov. 30 at St. John's Lutheran Church in Barrhead, Alberta, where he is called to serve as pastor.

ORDINATION ANNIVERSARIES

75 years

The Rev. Arnold Earl Schlueter

65 years

The Rev. Allen K. Griep
The Rev. James A. Harrison
The Rev. J. Weldon Smith

60 years

The Rev. Leland Bottjen
The Rev. James E. Hanson
The Rev. John P. Kline
The Rev. Neal E. Snider

55 years

The Rev. Edwin R. Fidler
The Rev. Victor C. Langford III
The Rev. Lawrence Lystig
The Rev. Henry Schulte Jr.
The Rev. Paull Edward Spring

50 years

The Rev. Paul Arnold
The Rev. David P. Baese
The Rev. James A. Clark
The Rev. Eugene Grimm
The Rev. Bruce G. Lundberg
The Rev. Paul G. Reiff
The Rev. Raymond Charles Scheck
The Rev. Alden Towberman
The Rev. Ronald Warren

45 years

The Rev. Craig C. Dohse
The Rev. Joseph M. Freeman
The Rev. Daniel Hart
The Rev. George L. Johnson
The Rev. William S. Ketchie
The Rev. Dennis A. Meyer
The Rev. Randal L. Ouimette
The Rev. Thomas A. Phillips
The Rev. Michael Tamorria
The Rev. W. Paul Weeg

40 years

The Rev. Hugh W. Brewer
The Rev. Mark Jamison
The Rev. Craig L. Loving
The Rev. David Mann
The Rev. Christopher Gerald Milarch
The Rev. Carl Nielsen
The Rev. Allan A. Oman
The Rev. Mark Q. Rowland
The Rev. William A. Rush III
The Rev. Steven J. Wadle
The Rev. Thomas H. Walker

35 years

The Rev. Mark A. Billow
The Rev. Michael Domenech
The Rev. Gregory P. Fryer
The Rev. Carol E. A. Fryer
The Rev. Paul William Gausmann
The Rev. Lawrence A. Gember
The Rev. Steven G. Gilbertson
The Rev. Marshall E. Hahn
The Rev. Mary Bernadette Havens
The Rev. W. Stephen Johnson
The Rev. David Keener
The Rev. Alan K. Knoke
The Rev. Douglas B. Lindsay
The Rev. Paul Lintern
The Rev. Todd P. Peterson
The Rev. Eric M. Riesen
The Rev. Elizabeth Joy Toler
The Rev. William E. White
The Rev. David K. Woodby

30 years

The Rev. Cathy A. Ammlung
The Rev. Thomas J. Beam
The Rev. Gerald M. Berggren
The Rev. Mariola Z. Bergquist
The Rev. Thomas L. Christenson
The Rev. James D. Cords
The Rev. Michael D. Fiske
The Rev. Steven Ernest King
The Rev. Timothy J. Swenson
The Rev. Janice A. Unger

25 years

The Rev. Thomas John Anderson
The Rev. Steven C. Bang
The Rev. Debra L. Domeier
The Rev. Douglas V. Hedman
The Rev. Karen M. Jersild
The Rev. Gregory Gottfried Kern
The Rev. Daniel T. Lioy
The Rev. Alfredo R. Luna
The Rev. Keith A. Menter
The Rev. John R. Miller
The Rev. Constance M. Morrow
The Rev. Rimón R. Said
The Rev. Kevin Lyle Scott
The Rev. Diana Lee Seaman
The Rev. John Sutton
The Rev. Edward L. Thomas
The Rev. Pamela L. Wells

20 years

The Rev. Howard William Burnie
The Rev. Barbara I. Busboom
The Rev. H. Brett Collins
The Rev. Daniel R. Edwards
The Rev. James Leroy Friesner Jr.
The Rev. Michael A. Greenauer
The Rev. W. Carol Johnson
The Rev. Marc R. Lapointe
The Rev. Nijhar J. Minz
The Rev. Kenneth James Nelson
The Rev. C. Jason Sigmon
The Rev. David J. Smith
The Rev. Wesley Khristopher Teixeira-Alves
The Rev. Benjamin Unseth
The Rev. David K. Zandt

These ordination anniversaries were recognized at the 2020 NALC Mission Convocation.

We thank God for the faithful ministry of these pastors.

2021 NALC BUDGETS APPROVED

The 2020 NALC Mission Convocation approved a \$2 million Operating Budget for the North American Lutheran Church for 2021.

Budgets were also approved for the church's designated funds: \$680,000 for the Theological Education Fund (which includes the North American Lutheran Seminary); \$205,000 for the Great Commission Fund; and \$123,000 for the Disaster Response Fund.

The proposed budgets for the Operating Budget and the Disaster Response Fund are balanced. However, the budgets for the Theological Education Fund and Great Commission Fund anticipate spending some cash reserves — budgeting expenses greater than anticipated income.

“As the North American Lutheran Church completes its first decade of existence, our church body remains on solid financial footing. The NALC is blessed with generous and dedicated donors, both congregations and individuals, particularly for specific initiatives such as disaster response and theological education. Our church body enjoys strong financial reserves and a dedicated staff which works hard to accomplish much with limited resources,” NALC Treasurer Ryan Schwarz reported.

“A significant financial issue which has faced the NALC over the past few years is that regular operating income has not been sufficient to cover operating expenses,” he said. “Operating expenses grew somewhat over the past few years, 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. Regular operating income, which is primarily provided by congregational benevolence, did not keep pace.”

“I am pleased to report that as a result of careful expenditure planning, and with the critical assumption that congregational benevolence will continue to grow consistent with past trends, the proposed budget for 2021 is balanced,” he said.

In addition to benevolence giving through the NALC, congregations are encouraged to support at least one local, one domestic and one global mission.

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 reported that 5 to 7 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 to the convocation, the 2021 budgets, staff compensation information and the audited financial statements and budgets from previous years. You can find the reports at thenalc.org/financial-reports.

Ryan Schwarz has served as treasurer for the NALC throughout its existence. He will be leaving the position on Sept. 30. Bishop Selbo expressed the appreciation of the NALC for Schwarz's faithful service to the church.

NALC SEEKING A NEW TREASURER

The North American Lutheran Church is seeking a new treasurer. The position would begin on Oct. 1.

The treasurer is the chief financial officer of the NALC, overseeing the receiving and disbursing of all funds and keeping accurate accounts of all transactions. The treasurer also provides complete and accurate reports for review by all members.

The NALC's regular financial tasks are overseen by Anne Gleason, financial administrator.

The treasurer is appointed by the Executive Council. For more information on the position, please contact Bishop Dan Selbo at dselbo@thenalc.org.

KEVIN AND SARAH PFISTER ARE NEW NALC GLOBAL WORKERS IN BULGARIA

Kevin and Sarah Pfister are new NALC Global Workers, currently serving with the sending agency Operation Mobilization in Ruse, Bulgaria, as marketplace workers.

Their journey began when Kevin received his first job playing the bassoon in an orchestra in Sarajevo, the capital of Bosnia and Herzegovina. While he was there, he fell in love with the Balkans and the idea of sharing the Gospel among the people there.

Kevin met many missionaries in the city, who helped him discover his calling to continue serving as a tentmaker-style missionary — playing in the orchestra and doing music ministry. Between his first and second years in Bosnia, he met Sarah, who felt called in the same direction.

While the opportunity to continue serving in Bosnia long-term did not come to fruition, the Lord brought a new opportunity for them to serve in Ruse, Bulgaria, beginning in 2017.

Their current ministries include shining the light of Christ and spreading the Gospel among colleagues in the Ruse State Opera orchestra, serving as the music ministers at a church plant in the city that is being led by a local Bulgarian pastor and leading a music education program for children and parents based on Christian principles.



Kevin and Sarah Pfister



Some of their long-term ministry visions include building a larger missions team in Ruse, growing the local church through outreach events and discipleship programs, as well as seeing local Bulgarians rise up in faith to preach the Gospel and lead the local church.

Both Kevin and Sarah have bachelor's and master's degrees in music performance and have a passion for using music to worship, build bridges and preach the Gospel wherever the Lord leads.

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Kevin and Sarah offerer these thoughts on their ministry:

We have personally experienced how important relationships are for building trust and a right to be heard here in Bulgaria. That is why we feel that one of the best ways to reach people with the Gospel here in Ruse is to live and work among the local population, continually grow in our understanding of the history, culture and language of the country and find ways to personally connect with individuals around us. Over time we pray that we will reflect the love of God through our words and actions to those around us. We hope that Bulgarians will no longer be afraid or indifferent toward Christianity but would rather earnestly desire to have a personal relationship with Jesus Christ.

Now that 30 years have passed since the fall of communism in Bulgaria, we also see the growing number of people who have never lived under communist rule. We believe that this new generation of young adults and students is the way of the future for Bulgaria as they are open minded, curious and desire to see and effect positive change in the world.



Our hope is to see the birth of a new generation of strong Christian believers in Bulgaria who will faithfully serve God and proclaim truth throughout Bulgaria. To achieve this, we hope to continue our work with children and find more ways to connect with students and the youth in Ruse in the coming years – in order to share with them the Gospel, disciple them as they come to faith and encourage them as they live out and seek to share the Good News with others.

Within the church, we understand the struggles and discouragement that believers feel here in Bulgaria as a minority group within the country. We are continually humbled by the opportunity to encourage and support believers and church leaders in Ruse through our service in the church and our presence within the body of believers. We look forward to being a part of the growing church here in Ruse and experiencing God at work within the church, the city of Ruse, and Bulgaria at large.

Kevin and Sarah Pfister are NALC global workers serving Ruse, Bulgaria. To learn more or partner with them in ministry, please visit thenalc.org/partners/kevin-sarah-pfister.

SAN MIGUEL LUTHERAN CHURCH IN FORT WORTH, TEXAS

San Miguel Lutheran Church is a thriving Hispanic ministry and NALC congregation in Fort Worth, Texas. More than six years ago, San Miguel left their former church body and joined the NALC, of which they have greatly appreciated being a member congregation. On an average Sunday, 200 to 300 people join together to worship in Spanish. They are served by Pastor Juan Portillo.

Alongside their beautiful worship services, they are involved in numerous outreaches in the Fort Worth area, where they additionally offer weddings, confirmations and quinceañeras. It is a very special and growing ministry. However, these years have not gone without challenges.

Three years after their departure, their former church body filed a lawsuit against San Miguel for repayment of gifted grants which had been given to the congregation over many years. While the plaintiff argued that the grants stipulated that if the recipient left the church body there would need to be repayment, San Miguel contended that grants by definition are not monies needing to be repaid. This led to an unfortunate, long and difficult legal battle.

In June of this year, a settlement was reached, allowing San Miguel to the full claim on its property and congregation, but requiring a monthly payment to their former church body over the next 10 years. The members and leadership of San Miguel are overjoyed. They are now free to focus on their ministry and mission to their neighborhood and



beyond, especially to the increasing Hispanic populations in their midst.

Unfortunately, the settlement will put a serious strain on San Miguel. In normal times they are a self-supporting ministry, however, in addition to the lawsuit, the COVID-19 pandemic has also hit them hard. A number of their members have had the virus, and their community has also suffered, causing worship attendance to decrease significantly. While they have serious challenges ahead, their ministry and outreach continues and moves forward, and the NALC is thrilled to have them as one its congregations.

As a Mission-Driven church body, the NALC believes that the mission of the Church is to preach the Gospel and to make disciples for Christ. We believe that making disciples — in our congregations, in our communities and nations, and around the world — must be a priority of the Church in the present age. We are excited to see San Miguel live as a community with that very passion to serve those around them in the name of Christ Jesus.

Please keep San Miguel in your prayers. This is an exciting ministry of the NALC. If you would like more information about this outreach, if you would like to participate in the work of this congregation or if you might be interested in becoming a mission partner with San Miguel, please contact the NALC missions office at missions@thenalc.org or 651-633-6004.



MORE THAN \$600,000 IN LWR HUMANITARIAN AID FOR REFUGEES DESTROYED IN BEIRUT EXPLOSION

Lutheran World Relief (LWR) has learned that three 40-foot shipping containers filled with humanitarian aid that included thousands of handmade quilts and baby-care items were destroyed in the devastating Aug. 4 explosions at the port of Beirut, Lebanon.

The shipment, which also included school supplies for students and personal care kits, were destined for refugees living in Lebanon, principally from Syria and the Palestinian territories.

The containers were part of a shipment to be distributed by Anera, an NGO and longtime Lutheran World Relief partner that provides humanitarian assistance and sustainable development to advance the well-being of refugees and other vulnerable communities in the Middle East.

The loss of more than 22,000 quilts, sewn by individuals and members of Lutheran congregations across the United States, could mean a more bitter winter for thousands of refugees, said Melanie Gibbons, deputy director, outreach and engagement at Lutheran World Relief.

"Our quilts are made with love by those who painstakingly craft them, and they're deeply appreciated by the people in distress who receive them, both for the warmth and the message of care they provide," Gibbons said.

In addition, the shipping containers held 100 cartons of kits filled with school supplies, 300 cartons of personal care kits and 125 cartons of baby care kits.

More than 47,000 quilts and kits were destroyed in the Beirut explosion. The total value of the lost shipments was approximately \$624,000.



"Our hearts are breaking as we grieve and pray with our brothers and sisters in Beirut," said Daniel Speckhard, president and CEO of Lutheran World Relief. "We are committed to replacing the aid that was lost and are working on an emergency response to provide assistance as the city recovers and rebuilds."

The explosions killed more than 200 people, injured more than 5,000 and left at least 300,000 without shelter. The blast was strong enough to register as the equivalent of a 3.3-magnitude earthquake and was felt as far as Cyprus, 150 miles away.

Lutheran World Relief is asking individuals and congregations to provide quilts and kits to replace those that were destroyed.

Lutheran World Relief is a ministry partner of the North American Lutheran Church. To partner with their ministry or learn more, please visit lwr.org.

MOVED TO MISSIONS

2019 was a busy year for Moved to Missions and one that included some highlights that were different from the last several years.

In 2019, along with the Canadian Mission District of the NALC, we co-sponsored a short-term mission trip to Mexico. The Rev. Karl Johnsen, pastor of Calvary Evangelical Lutheran Church in Edmonton, Alberta, led the journey while Moved to Missions provided logistical support.

Our team of volunteers spent two weeks in Mexico. Team activities included building two homes for local families; maintenance work for the campus of Bethel Bible College; VBS programs at two local churches; program enrichment for residents and respite for volunteer workers at Gabriel House Rehabilitation Center; and instruction in Lutheran theology to staff and students at Bethel Bible College.



Team members participated in each of the activities described above. We worked closely with staff and volunteers from the local mission partners. First-time participants learned more about Mexican living conditions, culture and the objectives of our local mission partners.

Those of us who have been on previous mission trips visited with old friends and strengthened our relationships with the groups that we work with in



Mexico. We form lasting friendships that continue through social media between visits to Mexico.

As always, the critical work of providing funding assistance for our mission partners in Mexico continued to be our primary focus between trips. All our local mission partners recognize and appreciate our longer-term commitment to the work they do.

Moved to Missions and the Canadian Mission District are in very preliminary planning stages for another joint mission trip, tentatively scheduled for the winter of 2021-2022.

To learn more or partner with this recognized ministry of the North American Lutheran Church, please visit thenalc.org/partners/moved-to-missions.



CELEBRATING THE WORD OF GOD HERE AND NOW

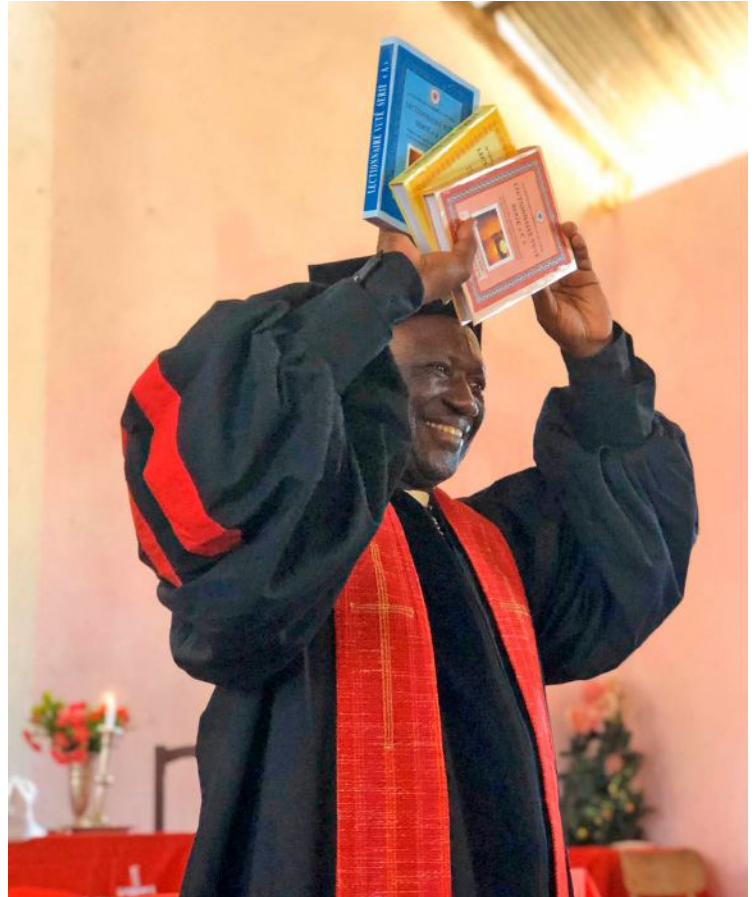
“The people acclaimed the Word of God as their hero, their triumphant leader!” Martin Weber said, describing the people’s reactions in Nyamboya, Cameroon, as they received newly-published Scripture readings in the language that speaks to their heart.

Lutheran Bible Translators missionaries Martin and Joan Weber have served in Cameroon in western Africa for 38 years, helping make God’s Word available in several languages. They recently celebrated the lectionary dedications in the Kwanja-Ndung and the Vuté languages.

What’s a lectionary? A lectionary is a series of Bible readings organized for each Sunday and other special days of the church year. For each Sunday or special service, there is a reading from the Old Testament, Psalms, Gospels and Epistles. The readings are not randomly selected, but carefully chosen to follow the life of Christ and reflect the seasons of the church year. Lectionaries help pastors and lay readers prepare for services and can be used for Bible studies, family devotions and personal reflection.

Why use a lectionary? Using local languages in public church practice, like the lectionary, dignifies those language communities. When a translation is recognized by the larger Church, the language community is recognized as part of the Body of Christ. The translated readings give readers and listeners God’s Word in a language they can understand!

Is this important? “The lectionary connects present Christians with past generations who have used the same schedule of readings for centuries,” a local pastor shared. “Amazing unity is created among millions of Christians across the globe on any given Sunday. They hear the same texts following the same lectionary! Spanning thousands of miles and



Pastor Paul Tshell, one of the Vuté translators, presents the lectionary series to the Vuté language community at the dedication ceremony.

generations of believers, we are one Body, strengthened by one Word.”

Bible translation cannot happen without you. With your help, people like the Kwanja-Ndung and Vuté now have access to the Word of God. To learn more, please visit lbt.org/project/missionaries-martin-and-joan-weber or lbt.org.

Lutheran Bible Translators is a recognized ministry of the North American Lutheran Church. To partner with their ministry or learn more, please visit thenalc.org/partners/lutheran-bible-translators.

“NO WORRIES”

Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice. Let your reasonableness be known to everyone. The Lord is at hand; do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

— Philippians 4:4-7 ESV

There are certain phrases that find their way into common English usage which are silly at best and irritating at their worst.

For example, it is baffling when someone says, “Thank you,” and the response is, “No problem.” What kind of message is that? Why not simply reply, “You’re welcome!”

Another example is the current, “No worries!” One can only assume this has come into common usage as a result of the Disney movie, *Lion King*, which has trademarked the Swahili phrase, “*hakuna matata*,” which means, as the song goes, “no worries,” although it was first coined in a 1982 song by a band in Kenya.

No worries? Really? If only it were true! “Worry” is defined as “to give way to anxiety or unease; to allow one’s mind to dwell on difficulty or troubles.”

We are reminded of the account of Mary and Martha in Luke 10:38-42, where Martha is worrying and distracted by many things, while the Lord says to her, “Martha, Martha, you are anxious and troubled about many things, but one thing is necessary” (ESV). And what is that one thing? To sit at the feet of Jesus, listening to Him!

If only life could be that simple? If only we could give ourselves, wholly, to Jesus and His Word and His teaching and His life-giving, life-transforming message! In these times, we are indeed worried, troubled and distracted by many things:



MINISTRY MATTERS

REV. DR. DAVID WENDEL
ASSISTANT TO THE BISHOP
FOR MINISTRY AND ECUMENISM

The threat of COVID-19 and the risk we might carry it to a vulnerable loved one, friend or neighbor.

The reality we might come down with the virus and be isolated from family while struggling to overcome the disease.

Many continue to be unemployed and business owners are wrestling with how to reopen in accordance with guidelines before they are forced to close permanently.

Parents are truly anxious about the decisions of state and county officials related to reopening schools for the fall, need for online study while working moms and dads wrestle with work schedules, reduced income and lack of childcare.

All this comes in the midst of a hyper-political election season in the United States which is full of vitriol and predictions about the dark and dismal future awaiting us, should one candidate or the other be elected, as we see reports of ongoing violence and unrest in major cities.

And then, as if the stressors outside the church were not sufficient to raise our blood pressure, it seems there is as much anxiety within our congregations, as well.

We talked last month about the tension many congregations are experiencing as they struggle with returning to worship in-person, in the church building. And yet, interacting with pastors and

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congregations, it seems these tensions may be a manifestation of a deeper reality — that we are living in a time when there is heightened worry and anxiety!

In “normal” times, most congregations would probably make decisions about returning to worship and more regular schedules with grace and love, never missing a beat.

With the underlying concerns causing us to dwell on our difficulties and troubles, simple discussions and decisions ignite and become major conflicts in homes, families and congregations.

We are seeing this especially in our congregations with a pastoral vacancy. As the time without a pastor has been extended because of the coronavirus shut-down, members, councils and call committees are more anxious about their future and are finding it difficult to keep the call process a spiritual process, with time for prayer and “waiting for the Lord” (Psalm 27:14).

When it is difficult to stop and sit down with Mary at the feet of Jesus, ignoring the swirling stressors all around us, what counsel comes to us from Scripture?

+ Make time for joy, in the midst of the anxiety.

While in prison, St. Paul was able to write to the Christians in Philippi, reminding them to rejoice in the face of opposition and worry. “Rejoice in the Lord always,” writes Paul, “again I will say, rejoice!” (Philippians 4:4 ESV). Find reason for joy, today — because the Lord is near, because Jesus is risen from death and is victorious over sin, death and the devil, because He has promised, “I am with you always, to the end of the age” (Matthew 28:20 ESV).

+ Let this be a time for intentional and intensive prayer! My beloved brother, the Rev. Dr. Gemechis Buba, has been in a time of prayer and fasting leading up to the Ethiopian new year, which begins Sept. 11. Even those who are homebound, quarantined for 14 days or struggling to find new employment will find strength and comfort in prayer. Paul encourages us to let our requests be known to God — but he also wants our prayer to be grounded in gratitude and

thanksgiving. This keeps us focused, not on what we want or need, but on what God has already given! In spite of everything, we are a blessed and gifted people!

+ Remember you have the peace of Christ!

Speaking with His disciples in the Upper Room on Maundy Thursday, the Lord says, “I have said this to you, that in me you may have peace. In the world you have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world” (John 16:33 RSV). Again and again, the Risen Lord Jesus spoke peace to His followers, saying, “Peace be with you.” In the midst of uncertainty and anxiety about the future, the Lord grants peace to His troubled children. We are of good cheer because the Lord Jesus has overcome the world!

May these unusual times be marked, for disciples of Jesus and for our congregations, not by anxiety and worry, but by joy, prayer and peace — that the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will keep our hearts and minds in Christ Jesus!

Pastor David Wendel is the assistant to the bishop for ministry and ecumenism. You may contact him at dwendel@thenalc.org.

PRAYER MARCH IN WASHINGTON, D.C.

A prayer march is planned for Saturday, Sept. 26, in Washington, D.C. The goal of the prayer march is to intercede to God for the United States and the world during these troubled times. This is a dedicated prayer march, not a protest and not a political rally supporting any candidate or political party.

Participants will gather at the Lincoln Memorial at 11:30 a.m. and the march will begin at noon and proceed to the U.S. Capitol with prayer stops along the way where participants will pray silently.

You can learn more about the prayer march at prayermarch2020.com. Those interested in taking part may contact the Rev. Dr. Dennis Di Mauro who will be organizing an NALC group at the prayer march. He can be reached at 703-568-3346 or dennisdimauro@yahoo.com.

YOUTH AND FAMILY MINISTRY

By Laurie Pecuch

If you missed our online sessions on Aug. 15, know we are happy to connect individually with your congregation.

We can help in developing or revisiting your safeguarding system. We can also help in thinking through anything related to children's, youth and/or family ministry.

And then, wow! The school year is upon us. This means it is time to start the school year monthly webinars. We will continue our "trot" through the

New Testament. The first is on Sept. 8 at 2 p.m. ET via Zoom and Facebook live. If you are on our monthly email distribution list or connected to the NALC Youth Workers Facebook page you will receive the link on the first business day in September. If not, contact us at the email address below for the Zoom link.

Also, please check out our five-minute video report from the 2020 NALC Mission Convocation and all of the resources available at faithwebbing.com.

Laurie Pecuch serves the NALC as a youth ministry coach. You may contact her at families@thenalc.org.

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