



## NOMINATIONS ANNOUNCED FOR POSITIONS TO BE ELECTED AT MISSION CONVOCATION

The Nominating Committee of the North American Lutheran Church has announced the names of three pastors and one layperson who have been nominated to serve on the NALC Executive Council.

The Nominating Committee also announced two nominees for the Board of Regents of the North American Lutheran Seminary (NALS).

The Nominating Committee announced the names of candidates nominated to serve in positions to be elected at the 2022 NALC Mission Convocation to be held online Aug. 5-6. The announcement was made in a May 6 email to NALC congregations and pastors.

The convocation will elect one lay person and one pastor to the NALC Executive Council and two members of the Court of Adjudication – all to three-year terms.

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**Tony Ede**  
**Executive Council**



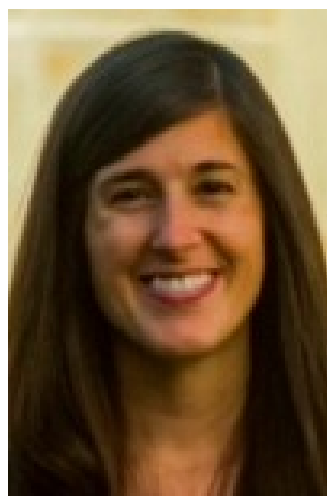
**Franklin Gore**  
**Executive Council**



**Theresa Jacobson**  
**Executive Council**



**Michael Shasberger**  
**Executive Council**



**Lynnae Douglas**  
**Board of Regents**



**Roger Weyersberg**  
**Board of Regents**

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Dr. Michael Shasberger, a member of Prince of Peace Lutheran Church in Santa Barbara, California, has been nominated for the lay position on Executive Council. Dr. Shasberger is a professor of music and worship at Westmount College. He will be retiring later this year.

The Rev. Tony Ede of First Evangelical Lutheran Church in Manchester, Iowa; the Rev. Dr. Franklin J. Gore of Epiphany Lutheran Church in Pensacola, Florida; and the Rev. Theresa A. Jacobson of Grace Lutheran Church in Thornville, Ohio, have been nominated for the ordained pastor position on Executive Council.

The convocation will also elect three members of the NALS Board of Regents to five-year terms.

Lynnae E. Douglas of Emmanuel Evangelical Lutheran Church in Export, Pennsylvania, and Roger Weyersberg of Redeemer Lutheran Church in Owosso, Michigan, have been nominated for the NALS Board of Regents.

The Nominating Committee is still seeking the names of candidates for nomination to serve on Executive Council, Court of Adjudication and Board of Regents. The deadline for submitting nominations is June 17.

The term lengths — three years instead of four for Executive Council and Court of Adjudication and five years instead of six for the Board of Regents — were changed as a part of the NALC's transition to having in-person convocations every other year.

Biographical information on the nominees is available online at [thenalc.org/nominations](https://thenalc.org/nominations).

The Executive Council functions as the board of directors for the NALC, providing leadership for the church between annual convocations. The council normally meets in person on a quarterly basis.

The Court of Adjudication hears appeals from disciplinary decisions; resolves questions of interpretation of NALC governing documents; and decides claims that a person or entity has violated these governing documents. Both pastors and lay members may be elected to the Court of Adjudication.

The Board of Regents is made up of nine members (clergy or lay), the bishop and the seminary president. Its chief responsibilities are to provide oversight, supervision and direction for the NALS Network and president, including fiscal plans, new programs and initiatives, resolution of disputes and fund raising.

Congregations are encouraged to nominate individuals for any of the open positions. Please confirm that individuals are willing and able to serve prior to submitting their names.

Those who feel called to serve in any of these positions are asked to contact the leaders of their congregation to inform them of their openness to serving.

Brief descriptions of the duties of each position and nomination and biographical forms are available at [thenalc.org/nominate](https://thenalc.org/nominate).

Questions may be directed to the Nominating Committee at [nominations@thenalc.org](mailto:nominations@thenalc.org).

Any additional nominations received by the June 17 deadline will be added to the list of nominees and reported in the NALC News.

### LET'S KEEP IN TOUCH

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NORTH AMERICAN  
LUTHERAN  
CHURCH

*Please copy and share this newsletter widely.*



# NORTH AMERICAN LUTHERAN SEMINARY CALLS DR. DAVID LUY AS THEOLOGY PROFESSOR

The North American Lutheran Seminary (NALS) has called Dr. David Luy to the position of Associate Professor of Systematic Theology.

Dr. Luy will be teaching core curriculum courses, as well as closely mentoring NALS students as they prepare for ministry. Dr. Luy will also be added to the faculty of Trinity School for Ministry in Ambridge, Pennsylvania, home of the NALS Seminary Center.

Dr. Luy, a Lutheran layperson, comes to the NALS from Trinity Evangelical Divinity School in Deerfield, Illinois, where he served as both chair of the Department of Biblical and Systematic Theology and as Associate Professor of Biblical and Systematic Theology.

He currently lives in Kenosha, Wisconsin, with his wife Pam, and their children Kara, Nate and Seth. They are members of St. Mark Lutheran Church in Lindenhurst, Illinois.

He has a bachelor's degree from Wheaton College, a Masters of Divinity from Trinity Evangelical Divinity School and a Ph.D. from Marquette University.

Along with his extensive experience in teaching theology at master's and doctoral levels, he has also completed extensive research surrounding the historical development and modern-day implementation of reformation theologies.

Dr. Luy is the author of *Dominus Mortis: Martin Luther on the Incorruptibility of God in Christ*, a book on Martin Luther's Christology. He is the co-editor of the book *Evil and the Doctrine of Creation*. He is also the author of multiple essays that have been featured in journals such as *Luther Digest*, *The International Journal of Systematic Theology*, *Modern Theology* and the *Oxford Encyclopedia of Martin Luther*.



**Dr. David Luy**

Dr. Luy has been a featured speaker for the NALC's Braaten-Benne Lectures in Theology which precede the NALC Mission Convocation when it gathers in person. He has been involved in the NALC Younger Theologians gathering since 2017. He has also been a guest lecturer for the NALS.

"We are thrilled to have Dr. Luy come aboard," said the Rev. Dr. Eric Riesen, president of the NALS. "We are confident in his ability to form our students with God-given wisdom and deep knowledge of Scripture."

Dr. Luy is passionate about equipping the next generation of faithful pastors with the sound theology and doctrine required to answer the call to ministry.

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# NALS PROFESSOR

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"It is a great honor for me to be joining the faculty of the NALS," said Dr. Luy. "I resonate deeply with the Core Values of the NALC, and it will be a joy to assist in advancing its mission through the ministry of theological education."

Dr. Luy has been formed in the Lutheran Tradition since childhood. "My formation in the Lutheran tradition began at Immanuel Lutheran Church in Freeport, Illinois, the parish where I was baptized, and where I received catechetical instruction in preparation for confirmation. A more robust commitment to the Lutheran theological tradition coalesced during early adulthood as I progressed in the journey of theological education within the context of various, confessionally diverse, educational institutions."

Dr. Luy received his official call from both the NALS Board of Regents and the NALC Executive Council.

Dr. Luy replaces Dr. David Yeago who is retiring as Professor of Systematic Theology and Ethics for the NALS and Trinity School for Ministry.

"The addition of Dr. David Luy to replace Dr. David Yeago is an answer to prayer. His ability to teach with substance and clarity, his passion and love for the Gospel and the Church, and his deep desire to be instrumental in recruiting and forming pastors for the ordained ministry are among the many gifts he brings to the position. His presence will continue and strengthen our ability to prepare Christ-Centered pastors for the NALC," said NALC Bishop Dan Selbo.

The NALS is a seminary network across the United States and Canada forming pastors and church leaders who will faithfully preach, teach and live God's eternal truth, through Word and Sacrament, proclaiming Christ's cross and resurrection, making disciples who will renew and grow the Church in Christ's name.



**Dr. David Yeago is retiring as Professor of Systematic Theology and Ethics for the North American Lutheran Seminary and Trinity School for Ministry.**

**Prior to coming to the NALS in 2014, Dr. Yeago taught for more than two decades at Lutheran Theological Southern Seminary in Columbia, South Carolina.**

**"Since the beginning of the North American Lutheran Seminary, Dr. Yeago has been a blessing to our students and our church body. His insightful understanding of Scripture and the Lutheran Confessions, along with his faithful and fervent love for the Gospel of our Lord Jesus have set a positive example and course for our future," said NALC Bishop Dan Selbo. "On behalf of the NALC, we thank Dr. Yeago for his many years of teaching, for his service on the NALC Commission on Theology and Doctrine, and for the significant role he has played in shaping and molding pastors and leaders for the Church."**

**"For the last several decades Dr. David Yeago has helped to form a cadre of orthodox and faithful Lutheran pastors. His former students often speak of the importance David had in their formation and continues to have in their ministries. He possesses that rare blend of academic rigor combined with a deep piety and love for the Church. The NALS is truly blessed to have him as a founding faculty member," said the Rev. Dr. Eric Riesen, NALS president.**

**A symposium and retirement celebration honoring Dr. Yeago's career will be held on Friday, June 17, at the NALS Seminary Center at Trinity School for Ministry in Ambridge, Pennsylvania. The symposium is entitled "Scripture, the Reformation and Catholic Tradition: Engaging the Work of Dr. David Yeago."**



# MISSION UPDATE FROM PASTOR VALERY HRYHORYK IN BELARUS

Dear brothers and sisters, greetings in the name of Christ! Here is an update on the ministry of Belarus Lutheran Missionary Fellowship (BLMF).

We live in a very difficult time — the COVID-19 pandemic and war in Ukraine. It is obvious that we live in a time of global changes and the world shall never be the same again.

Many unbelievers ask where is God and why He allows such suffering to occur on our planet. People forget and some of them do not know that they themselves are victims of their own sins. The words from the Bible however are encouraging: “And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose” (Romans 8:28 NIV).

We look at the world’s events through the eyes of Jesus. Jesus came to this world to show us another kingdom, a spiritual kingdom of God. The message is: “Do not die without Christ!”

This is a part of the message of His Great Commission in short: “As a soldier in battle must never lay aside his shield, so must we never have the Word of God out of our minds” (Charles Spurgeon). We also must not forget to show love and compassion to our neighbors. Our prayer is for the Lord to intervene and put the war conflict in Europe to end. Please pray with us!



**Political situation in Belarus:** The people of Belarus find themselves hostages in their own country. After the bloody events in the year 2020, where thousands of people were jailed, suffered mockery, beatings and murder because they wanted fair and democratic elections, repression started immediately. Four hundred civil and charity organizations were closed.

Our congregation in Mazolovo village was asked to re-register, which means that we will probably have great difficulties with the re-registration.

Thousands of people from Belarus had to flee to Poland, Ukraine and the Baltic countries because of the political persecution.

Russian President Vladimir Putin was worried that Belarus might become a democracy and promised military help for Alexander Lukashenko, president of Belarus. Belarus is considered a dictatorship. What we have now is that the dictator quietly sold Belarus to Russia, without even asking the people of Belarus about it. Lukashenko does not control the situation in Belarus and receives news from the papers about the actions of Putin on the territory of Belarus.



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Unlike Ukraine, Belarus was conquered by Russia without a single shot. Now Belarus is a territory that is used by Russia to attack Ukraine. This war is a sin. It is so terrible! Lord, Have mercy!

The United States and the European countries were asked to recognize the fact, that Belarus is under the Russian occupation. Russian troops are concentrated in Belarus and are attacking the territory of Ukraine. There is a big possibility that the dictator will use the Belarus army to take part in the war on the side of Russia. Ninety percent of the population of Belarus is against the war.

We have announced that BLMF is operating on occupied territory. We are committed to continue with all BLMF ministries to the glory of God in the fulfillment of His Great Commission in these new circumstances. Thank you for your prayers and your ongoing support. Please pray for Belarus and for the war and the suffering of people to end. Lord, have mercy!

**Literature ministry:** Just before the war in Ukraine, we managed to complete our book project with our partners in Odessa, Ukraine. A big load of books was sent there. We hope and pray that the sent material shall be further used for the spiritual uplifting of Christians in Ukraine at this time of trial and also after the war is over. Please pray for that.

Further cooperation with the Gideons continues. New books were received for distribution. The book



is called *25 Stories from the Bible that I Love*. Please pray for such cooperation to continue.

**Theological education:** A three-day theological seminar took place in Vitebsk. Representatives from Vitebsk, Orsha, Polotsk and Minsk came to refresh their knowledge of the Small Catechism of Martin Luther. This was a blessed time of fellowship and prayer. The seminar was followed by a common worship and the Holy Supper. Praise be to God for this event. It is so important for brothers and sisters to be together and to encourage one another! We thank the Lord for making this event possible.

**Showing the love of Jesus to the neighborhood:** Ministry of love in action continues through BLMF's movement, "On duty for good." Food packages were distributed among the needy and the most socially vulnerable people in Vitebsk. The recipients were homeless people, people with low incomes and invalids. To God be the glory! Please pray for this important ministry to continue as it gives us opportunities to speak about Jesus and to display His love. Many of such people have only God to rely on as the local authorities do not pay attention to these socially vulnerable people. One of the men who received aid was a homeless man named Ivan. He lost his job and his home was taken for debts — no documents, no job, no home.

**Ministry to handicapped children and their parents:** BLMF's ministry to the handicapped continues. A meeting was held with Eduard Avetisyan, the

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chairman of the regional organization for the handicapped. We thank God for the opportunity to display the love of Jesus to the handicapped people. Please pray for this friendship to bear fruit for the kingdom of God. A good number of projects were planned for 2022. To God be the glory!

**Music ministry:** Golden Gate Christian music group is getting ready for a big concert in May and a garage concert in June. It is a good opportunity to tell people about spiritual things. We got in touch with many new people. Now as the pandemic requirements have been lowered, mass events became possible. Thank you, Lord, for that. Please pray for such events to be used for God's glory and the extension of His kingdom.

**Ministry to the congregation in Orsha:** One of the BLMF congregations is situated in the small town of Balbasovo, not far from Orsha. Orsha is a city with the population of 100,000 people, 100 km from Vitebsk. During the time of the pandemic, an online communication was established. We thank God that an actual meeting with a Holy Communion service was held recently. Things are getting slowly back to normal. Praise the Lord!

**BLMF is a member of European Lutheran Sunday School Association (ELSA).** The ELSA conference has been moved to 2023. This is the second time that the dates have been shifted — last year because of the COVID-19 restrictions, this year because of the war in Ukraine. Please pray for the event to take place next year. The ELSA conference gathers Sunday



school teachers from European countries. It is a platform for exchanging ideas concerning Sunday school ministry.

**Serving the elderly** is very important, especially at this difficult time. They need to feel our love and the love of Jesus. All of us shall be at this stage sooner or later. The Lord's Supper is also our assurance in Jesus and resurrection — a great reminder amidst this time. Valentina is in her 80s. She cannot attend worship at the church due to her serious illnesses, but Jesus loves her! Home visits to such people are regular. Please pray for such ministry to continue and for the elderly not to feel alone, especially in these uncertain times.

**Please pray for the summer Bible camp.** During our visit to Orsha some planning was done for the Bible camp this summer. Please pray for our plans to come to life. We plan to invite children from Smolensk, Minsk, Orsha, Vitebsk, Mazolovo and Polotsk. Ministry to youth and children remains BLMF's priority in the revival of the Lutheran Church in Belarus.

**Family information:** Unfortunately, my family and I could not escape the COVID-19 infection. For one month, our house was turned into a hospital. We are thankful to the Lord for the comparatively easy scenario. I was diagnosed with pneumonia. We have not yet regained all the strength after the illness and still feel much weakness. The body requires more



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# UPDATE ON CENTRALIZED NALC OFFICE IN DALLAS-FORT WORTH

At the 2021 NALC Mission Convocation, the NALC Executive Council provided the delegates with an overview of the need for a centralized office for the NALC.

After a lengthy study it was deemed that the best option for the centralized office was the Dallas-Fort Worth (DFW), Texas, area. The delegates overwhelmingly voted to endorse the plan to move ahead with locating a central NALC office in the Dallas-Fort Worth area.

Since the convocation, Bishop Dan Selbo, the Rev. Amy Little, general secretary, and members of the Executive Council have been looking at options that fit well with the space needed for the office but are not excessively large. Since its inception, the NALC has operated with a lean structure. That said, the NALC cannot be so lean as to stifle future growth or inhibit the church's ability to support the work of NALC congregations.

Leaders reported that the move to the new office would not happen until funds were available for the office space and for staff members to move to the DFW area. Those modest funding amounts are now available.

As North America emerges from the COVID-19 pandemic, the NALC has found itself in an active, competitive market for office space. At this point, a long-term solution that fits the needs for the NALC office has not been found. The Executive Council has set a goal for the long-term office to be established in the fall. As a result, leaders have pivoted to looking for short-term office rental space that would be available for rent on a monthly or quarterly basis.

Four job positions have yet to be filled in the DFW area. Leaders are coordinating with sensitivity the needs of current staff as they are impacted by the timing of the move to DFW. It is the goal to have a

short-term office so that staff who will be located in the DFW area can work most efficiently.

Information on the available positions in the DFW office is available at [thenalc.org/dallasopenings](https://thenalc.org/dallasopenings).

The Executive Staff and the Executive Council work to see that the NALC's four Core Values — Christ Centered, Mission Driven, Traditionally Grounded and Congregationally Focused — are at the forefront of life of the church.

"We are continually grateful for your Christ-Centered ministries in the communities God has called you to serve. As you celebrate the resurrection of our Lord Jesus, please know that you are kept in our prayers. Likewise, please keep our staff in your prayers as we move forward together in ministry," the Executive Council said in a statement.

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## BELARUS UPDATE

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rest than usual. The doctors say it takes about six months to get back to normal. In any case, we thank the Lord for the opportunity to continue to serve Him. We as a family are grateful to those of you who were supporting us with prayers and good encouraging words. Thank you very much!

Dear brothers and sisters! We here at BLMF thank God for you, for our faithful friends and supporters. Without you, the Lord's people, BLMF's ministry would not be possible. The Lord is acting in this world through His people. Thank you again and be blessed! Our prayer is that we all could see Jesus amidst all the turmoil and distress that is happening in the world today.



# SINE QUA NON

Not long after his conversion, the apostle Paul made an interesting statement about the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. He was talking about whether the dead could be raised; whether Jesus had actually come back to life. What he said was interesting, not so much because of what he said about Jesus, but because of what he said about us.

He said, “If Christ has not been raised, our preaching is useless, and so is your faith.” He said, “If Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile, and you are still in your sins.” He said, “If Jesus is still in the grave, those who’ve died as believers are all lost.” And then he said, “If Easter never happened — if our hope in Jesus is only for this life — then we are of all people, the most to be pitied.”

Why would he say that? Why would he make such an outlandish statement? Why would he put at stake everything Christianity stands for and believes in and base it upon whether Jesus came back to life?

He said it and he did it because it’s true. He said it and he did it because that’s exactly what we teach and believe. The Christian faith stands or falls upon the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Everything we do in the Church is 100 percent dependent upon whether Easter really happened.

If it happened, then it’s possible for you and me to have life, even when we die. If it happened, no matter who you are or what you’ve done, death cannot and will not stand in the way of your relationship with God. If it happened, then Easter is the best news this world has ever heard, the most important news for you to understand and apply in your life — if it happened.

If it didn’t happen, it doesn’t matter who you are or what you’ve done, what we teach and believe, what we think is going to happen when we die. Because if it didn’t happen, then it didn’t happen; and if it didn’t happen, then we are, as Paul said, of all people, the most to be pitied.



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## FROM THE BISHOP

REV. DR. DAN SELBO  
BISHOP

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The title of this article is not a misprint: *Sine Qua Non* (pronounced seen-ay qua non). That’s the title. Three Latin words meaning “without which not.”

Originally, that phrase was a legal term for “a condition or situation without which a certain outcome could not have happened.” It referred to an action or ingredient that was essential to a given result. As a result, over time, it was used in medicine regarding any sign or symptom or finding whose absence would very likely mean the absence of the disease being considered. Today, it’s used also in literature, as well as in language for a person’s will.

In the Bible, it’s not a phrase used at all. There is no *sine qua non* found anywhere. It’s Latin. The Bible was written in Hebrew and Greek. It’s not there. What is there is a clear and consistent witness to the things about which the Bible speaks. There are certain claims the Bible makes that become the *sine qua non* of the Christian faith. Claims that are so essential to what we teach and believe that without which all of Christianity would not be able to stand.

Now, there are many things we could mention that fall into this category. In this article, I want to focus on just three — three essential elements to the Christian faith, the *sine qua non*, the “without which not”, upon which everything we teach and believe either stands or falls.

Here they are:

1. The person of Jesus Christ — who He is and who He claimed to be.

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2. The work of Jesus Christ — what He did, what He accomplished and why.

3. The implications for your life and the reason you simply cannot ignore what happened on Easter.

### **The Person of Jesus Christ**

Let's take them one at a time, starting with the first: the person of Jesus Christ. You know, it's interesting, no matter where you go, who you talk to, there's almost no one in the world who has heard about Jesus who doesn't have an opinion about Jesus. Almost everyone who's heard about Jesus has an opinion.

Now, some of the opinions are nothing more than that — they're opinions. They're what people think, what they might even believe. They've heard about Him. They've read about Him. They've talked with others and formulated an opinion. But there's no factual basis for what they think. It's what they think. It's an opinion.

I have opinions about all kinds of things. I have opinions about technology, but I don't know nearly enough to get hired at Google. I have opinions about health care, but you would not want me as your doctor. I have opinions about government, about foreign policy, about what's happening in education and professional sports. I have many opinions. Every one of us does. But just because a person has an opinion doesn't mean that opinion is true.

I'll tell you what's true. Here's what Jesus claimed for Himself. Here's what He said about who He was and what He came into this world to accomplish. He said, in no uncertain terms, that He was God. He said, more than once, that He came into this world for the sole reason of saving it. He said He was born to die. He said that when He died, He'd come back to life. And He said, in coming back to life, that He'd become the only path to finding life.

Now, you can have an opinion about what He said — whether or not it was true. But you cannot argue with what He said. He said He was God. He said He



was going to die. And He said that, when He died, three days later He'd come back to life.

Now, either what He said was true or it wasn't. Either who He claimed to be was who He was, or it was all a lie. It can't work both ways. Either Jesus was God, or He wasn't. Either He came into this world to save it, or He didn't, and He was something else.

I read not long ago that in our culture today, in the past few years, there has been an increasing interest in spirituality and an increasing disinterest in the claims of the Christian faith. More people are asking the big questions of life — Where did we come from? Why are we here? What happens when we die? But they're not so sure about where to find the big answers to life.

Do you want to know the prevailing thought? All paths lead to the same place. That's the prevailing thought. Every religion gets you to the same destination. That's what many people think. But is it

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true? Is it actually the case? Are all religions going after the same thing? Or is there a difference? Is there a fundamental and distinguishing factor that can help sort it out?

The answer is that there is. The answer is that they are not the same. There is a difference. The difference is Jesus. The difference is His claim to be God. No other religion makes that claim. No other religious leader comes even close. The closest they come is to say their leader was sent from God — a prophet, a spokesman or a person that was holy.

That's not what Jesus said. He said He was God. You can't argue with that. He said, "I and the Father are one." And He said, "If you want to get to the Father, make it into the kingdom, then you need to go through me."

Now, you can have an opinion about what He said. You can believe what you want about whether it's true. But there's no question He said it. There's no debate about the claims He made. He made them. He said He was God, He said He was going to die, and when He died, He'd come back to life.

If it didn't happen, then it didn't happen. If it didn't happen, then all of this is worth nothing. But if it did, and He really was, and He died and actually came back?

It's the *sine qua non* of the Christian faith. It's the "without which not" upon which all of this either stands or falls. It doesn't matter what people think. Almost everyone has an opinion. Find out what's true. Listen to what Jesus said. Look at the facts and then figure it out for yourself.

The person of Jesus Christ. That's the first: who He is, who He claimed to be.

### **The Work of Jesus Christ**

The work of Jesus Christ. That's the second: what He did, what He accomplished, and why.

And so, what are the facts? What actually happened on that first Easter? We don't have time to go

through the whole story. Sit down some time and read the story. Find out what happened. Read through the Gospels.

There are four Gospels. Pick one of the four different accounts of Jesus' life. In those four accounts, there are a total of 89 chapters. In those 89 chapters, 29 are dedicated to the final week of Jesus' life. How come?

Four Gospels, four stories of Jesus' life, one out of three chapters dedicated to that final week? What's going on? I'll tell you what's going on. That's when it happened. That's when Jesus proved to the world that what He said about Himself was true.

Do you know what happens when a person is crucified? That's what happened to Jesus. He was crucified, nailed to a cross. Do you know what happens when a person's crucified? Do you know what happened to Jesus before He died?

Go through the accounts. In all four accounts, it says the same thing. Jesus was arrested and charged — six different trials, from Thursday night until Friday morning.

Do you know what they found in those trials? They found nothing. There was nothing Jesus had done wrong. They had no crime against Him, no accusation that would stick. Pilate was ready to let Him go. So was Caiaphas. So was Annas. It didn't happen. How come?

Do you know what Jesus said before those trials even started? He said, "No one takes my life from me. I lay it down of my own will." Why did He do it? Why didn't He call it off?

Matthew tells us the soldiers put a scarlet robe on Him, twisted a crown of thorns and forced it into His skull. They put a staff in His hand, knelt in front of Him and said, "Hail, King of the Jews!" It says they took the staff and struck Him in the head, again and again. Why did Jesus allow it? Why did He keep silent? The only innocent man who has ever lived — how come?

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Mark tells us that Jesus was flogged 39 times. Forty would kill a man. Jesus received 39. It almost killed Him, but not yet. Why did it happen? "He saved others," they shouted, "but He can't save Himself."

Do you want to know the truth? Most people don't want to know the truth. Do you want to know the truth? Jesus could have saved Himself, but then He couldn't have saved you. That's the truth. Jesus died so that you don't have to die. Jesus took the punishment that belonged to us, so we don't have to.

John says Jesus went out "carrying His own cross." Before being nailed to it, He had to carry it. Before hanging from it until He died, He had to carry it up the hill. He knew it was coming. Read the story. Many times He had predicted it. Why did He do it? Why did Jesus choose to die?

Luke says it was "the place called the Skull" where Jesus was crucified between two criminals, one on His right and the other on His left. Do you know what's ironic about that scene? Do you know what Jesus said from the cross? He said, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they are doing."

Let me ask you a question: Do you know what you're doing in life? Do you know the reason God has given you life? It's an important question. Most people never figure it out. They go all the way to the end and they never know why they're here. Do you know why you're here? It's not an accident.

You are not here for you. You've been placed in this world for Him. You are not here because you've chosen to be here. You're here because God has chosen you, in Jesus, to be His child.

That's what the work of Jesus was all about. Jesus didn't come into this world to condemn it. He came to save it. Jesus didn't hang on the cross and give up His life for no reason. He hung on the cross and gave up His life so you and I could have ours.

It's the *sine qua non* of the Christian faith. It's the "without which not" upon which all of this either stands or falls. If Jesus was not the Son of God, then your opinion is as good as mine. If Jesus had not



suffered and died as He did, and on the third day come back to life, then everything we're doing is for naught. The good news is that it's not for naught. The better news is that it all happened for you.

Again, read through the stories. Do you know what happens when a person is crucified? It's a torturous death. Do you know what else happened? The disciples were scared to death when Jesus died. That's what happened. Every one of them, except for John, was nowhere to be found. Judas betrayed Him. Peter denied Him. The others ran off and hid.

What happened to make it change? What took place that suddenly made the difference? What happened was Easter. What happened was that Jesus came back to life.

### The Implications for Your Life

That brings us to the final *sine qua non* of the Christian faith, the final and ultimate "without which not" all of this either stands or falls. Is Jesus still alive? That's the question. Are lives still being transformed? That's the ultimate test.

I'm not going to ask, again, what happens if it didn't happen? We already said: It's all a joke. We are, of all people, most to be pitied if it didn't happen. I'm not going to ask, "What happens if it didn't?" I am going to

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ask, “What happens if it did?” What if Jesus is actually alive?

Did you know there’s more proof of the resurrection of Jesus Christ than there is of the life of Pontius Pilate? Did you know there are more accounts of what happened when Jesus was raised than there are of when Columbus discovered the Americas?

Why is it so easy, for so many, to accept the one, and so hard to believe the other? Why do we take, so readily, almost at face value, the truth of almost any other historically recorded event, but have such a hard time with one that’s been so historically recorded?

One of the world’s most highly respected theologians and authors was a man named Wolfhart Pannenberg. Not long before he died, he made this statement. He said, “The evidence for Jesus’ resurrection is so strong that nobody would question it except for two things: One, it is a very unusual event; very unusual. And two, if you believe it happened, you have to change the way you live.”

Do you know what those disciples did after Easter? Do you know the kind of change that took place, once they realized the story was true? Their fear turned to faith. Their denials turned to devotion. Every one of those disciples was willing to sacrifice their life.

Go down the list. Philip was scourged and then crucified. Matthew was nailed to the ground before they cut off his head. Jude was beaten to death. Simon was tortured and nailed to a tree. John was whipped and then exiled. James was beheaded. The other James was pushed to his death from the top of a building. Andrew hung on a cross for three days before he died. Bartholomew was skinned alive. Thomas was speared with a javelin. Peter was crucified upside down.

Now, why do I tell you this? Not a very encouraging way to get people to sign up. I tell you because if the Resurrection never happened, none of what I just told you would have ever happened. No one in their right mind would die for a lie. No one in this world

would give up their life for something that wasn’t true.

The truth is it was true, and it is true, and there’s nothing more important in this life for you to know. Jesus died on the cross to become your Savior. He rose from the dead to become your Lord. But you’ll never know what it means to live, until you learn what it means to trust.

In football they call them the chain gang. Whenever it’s close to being a first down, out comes the chain gang to measure. Do you know the difference between knowing the story of Easter and living the life Jesus offers? It’s a matter of inches: 18 inches between having Jesus in your head and allowing Jesus into your heart.

People say, “God is my copilot!” I’ll tell you something: If God is your copilot, it’s time to trade seats. Jesus didn’t die to take a supporting role. He died to become your Lord. He came back to life to take control. And He’ll give you a better life, a more meaningful life, a life that can set you free, never end, even when you die. But it has to move from your head to your heart and, from there, into your life.

My friends, I can’t convince you to believe in the Resurrection. All I can do is to tell you what happened and why we teach and believe what we do. If it didn’t happen, then it didn’t happen, and all of this is a joke — our preaching, our teaching, everything we’re about. None of it matters if it didn’t happen. But if it did, then there’s nothing more important for you to know and to believe and to trust.

It’s the *sine qua non* of the Christian faith. It’s the “without which not” upon which it all depends. The person of Jesus — who He was and who He is. The work of Jesus — what He did and what He accomplished, and why. The implications for your life — why none of us can ignore what happened on that first Easter.

Don’t let Easter come and go with the story only in your head. Open your heart. Learn what it means to trust. Jesus died to become your Savior. He’s now calling you to trust Him as Lord.

# GRACE CHURCH IN WASHINGTON, NORTH CAROLINA, IS A SHARED MINISTRY OF NALC AND ACNA

Grace Church in Washington, North Carolina, is a worshipping community formed by a Lutheran congregation and an Anglican congregation.

Grace Church, a newly-named shared ministry of Grace Lutheran (NALC) and Christ Church (Anglican Church in North America) began worshipping together in Grace Lutheran's building on January 10, 2021.

Worship was led by the Rev. Joshua Yoder, Christ Church's pastor. Worship in the first year alternated monthly between the Anglican and Lutheran liturgies. Many tired of that and desired one worship format. In response, Grace now uses a "blended" worship liturgy that combines parts of both.

Grace Lutheran Church and Christ Church faced many decisions to get started and more decisions remain. Culturally, the two congregations are different in many ways that brings diversity of thought and most interesting discussions on policy and procedures.

Grace Church is now 16 months into the shared ministry. Following is a brief history of how the shared ministry began and how it went from an idea to a functioning church body.

Grace Lutheran Church was formed in the late 1980s. The Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) provided assistance, financial and otherwise, in the formation of Grace Lutheran, but Grace never had more than 60 members.

By the time 2017 rolled around, membership had declined to around 40, and Grace's popular part-time pastor departed for a full-time position. At that moment in time, thoughts were beginning to surface that Grace Lutheran could possibly age out of worship in the not-to-distant future.



***Pastor David Wendel, NALC assistant to the bishop for ministry and ecumenism, Jessica Yoder, Pastor Joshua Yoder and Bishop Terrell Glenn of the Anglican Diocese of the Carolinas at Pastor Joshua's installation as pastor of Grace Church in Washington, North Carolina.***

Grace's Call Committee did everything possible for more than three years to find a new pastor with no success. Over that time, there were a few expressions of interest that all turned out to be dead ends. Meanwhile, Grace employed an interim pastor who lived 90 miles away and commuted every Sunday for worship. Then COVID-19 hit and the

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ELCA advised against worship, so Grace's pastor stayed at home, unable to perform any local pastoral duties.

Then one day, a call came in out of the blue to the chair of Grace's Call Committee. It was Father Joshua Yoder, pastor of Christ Church, which was located in Grace's same city. He had heard of Grace's plight with an out-of-town pastor shut out by COVID-19, and asked if there was anything he could do to be of help.

Could he help by leading worship or visiting shut ins? Contact was made right away to the Bishop of the ELCA's North Carolina Synod asking if Grace could take Joshua up on his offer. "He can do anything but lead worship" was the reply.

Joshua's outreach led to meetings between him, the president of Christ Church's Vestry (Anglican Church Council), and two members of Grace's Call Committee.

Christ Church was about the size of Grace Lutheran, they worshiped in rented space in a strip shopping center, so they needed a building. Grace Lutheran needed a pastor so the shared ministry idea was born. The fit was exciting. We all believed the Holy Spirit was pushing us along.

However, the ELCA had already ruled against Grace using Joshua to lead worship since the ACNA was not in full communion with the ELCA. Christ Church was on-board to create the shared ministry, but Grace Lutheran had the additional "ELCA complication."

To pave the way for the shared ministry, Grace's congregation debated the issue and voted to leave the ELCA. At the same time, arrangements were made for Grace to join the NALC, which had agreed to accept the shared ministry with Joshua as the pastor.

After successful votes by both congregations to create the shared ministry, a Transition Team of six from each church was formed. The team met monthly for about six months. Subcommittees staffed by both churches were formed to deal with all of the many details. Finance, worship and music, property and

insurance all had important action items. Governing documents needed to be drafted. Each meeting identified new things to do, which were handed to each sub committee to accomplish before the next meeting.

By January 1, 2021, the Transition Team ceased to exist and turned over their work to a newly-formed leadership team, called the Vestry-Council. It consisted of five Anglicans, five Lutherans and the pastor. There were many, many decisions made along the way.

Here is an example of an idea that was critical to the success of the shared ministry and another that eased the transition:

When the finance subcommittee reached agreement on how to combine finances, it was a breakthrough moment. Each church agreed to deposit \$7,500 into a newly-opened checking account. Weekly offering deposits would go into the new account and all the church's operating expenses would be paid from that same checking account. With the exception of a small number of contributions made specifically to each church, the shared ministry's income and expenses would be equally shared. A single, uniform and shared budget was approved by the joint congregation.

Someone suggested that each Sunday at the beginning of worship, two or three members would be asked to introduce themselves. What a terrific idea! The intros did reveal an interesting cultural difference between the two churches. Almost all Lutherans were life-long and deeply valued their Lutheranism. The Anglicans had varied Protestant backgrounds and joined Anglicanism for a variety of personal reasons within the last 10 years.

One more note, Grace Church remains a shared ministry and not a merger, two churches under one roof. The leadership of both denominations have advised against merging at this time. The original thought was that a new constitution was needed for the merged church, but now we are engaged in drafting covenants to be voted on later that will govern the important details the shared ministry. A memo of understanding governs combined finances until the covenants are complete.

# THINKING OUTSIDE THE BOX FOR YOUR CONGREGATION

How are we going to fill all the pastoral vacancies in the NALC?

For the last few years, vacancies, both full and part-time, were usually no more than 35 at any given time. That was less than 10 percent of the total number of congregations and less than the 40 or so seminarians we had preparing for ministry year by year.

Now? The latest count was 70 congregational vacancies. Double the previous number! The reasons for this are not difficult to understand: we have had a large number of pastoral retirements, and we have new congregations affiliating with the NALC that come to us without a pastor. We have the same number of seminarians but more vacancies. How will we fill the pulpits of these congregations?

Hopefully you are aware of our newly approved alternative path called "Ordination Under Special Circumstances." This is an innovative process for those who may serve our smaller, more isolated congregations in special circumstances — meaning they are not able to call (and afford) a full-time pastor. While this will not be the normal path to ordination, it will help many of our congregations.

At the same time, we are supporting the NEXUS Institute at Grand View University, which is aimed at strengthening and deepening the faith of high school students, especially those who may be open to God's call to full-time pastoral ministry in the Church. While this will bear fruit in the long term, these students will not be ready for ordination for eight years, in some cases. This is a worthy strategic move, but it does not address the needs of today's congregations.

A major emphasis, as well, is the raising up of potential seminarians in every congregation of the NALC. Many pastors and congregational members know of persons who may have the gifts and abilities



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## MINISTRY MATTERS

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ASSISTANT TO THE BISHOP  
FOR MINISTRY AND ECUMENISM

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to serve as ordained ministers but need to be encouraged and supported. There is a plan for a seminarian recruitment staff person for the NALS, but a better strategy is for every pastor and member of the NALC to understand ourselves as "seminarian recruiters." Most pastors today were once told, "You might consider being a pastor." That kind of encouragement is invaluable in the hearts and lives of young persons discerning a call.

Let me suggest another important strategy — which could help fill our vacancies now! We are encouraging pastors and congregations to "think outside the box." Usually, a congregation which calls a full-time pastor considers that pastor to be "their" pastor.

Given the challenges we face, it would be helpful for congregations to consider: How might our congregation encourage our pastor to help neighboring vacant congregations? How might our congregation partner with other vacant congregations in our area?

It would be helpful for pastors to be asking: "How can I help neighboring vacant congregations to be served, pastorally?" We are moving toward a time when again, it may not be the norm for one pastor to serve one congregation. Two or three congregations may need to be served by one pastor — not because of financial shortfalls but because there is a shortage of pastors to fill the current need.

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This will require “out of the box” thinking by pastors, but even more by congregational leaders!

What are some real-life examples of this “out of the box” thinking?

In Washington, North Carolina, the NALC congregation had a building but no pastor, whereas the local Anglican Church in North America (ACNA) congregation had a pastor but no building. They covenanted together to form Grace Church — an Anglican-Lutheran Shared Ministry.

There have been some challenges and hurdles, but with those have come great opportunities for growth, mission and ministry. They are finding some visitors come because they are interested in this kind of congregation which more fully embodies the unity for which our Lord prayed at the Lord’s Supper. The NALC and ACNA are working to develop processes and procedures which will encourage and enable even more cooperation on the local level in the future.

Two congregations in Illinois are also thinking “outside the box” to ensure both churches have pastoral support. St. Paul Lutheran Church in Oregon, Illinois, is an NALC congregation and St. John’s Lutheran Church in Creston, Illinois, is affiliated with the NALC and Lutheran Congregations in Mission for Christ (LCMC). Realizing the challenges presented by call processes and vacancies today, the congregations recently committed themselves to sharing a pastor. This means they need only one pastor, not two, and should free up funding which will strengthen both congregations in their mission and ministry. Far from being a step backward for either congregation, they are stepping out boldly and courageously for service in the 21st century.

To fill our vacancies, it will require a total effort in each of these areas — all of us working together in creative, expansive ways to make pastoral ministry available to every congregation currently affiliated with the NALC — and those yet to come.

***Pastor David Wendel is the assistant to the bishop for ministry and ecumenism. You may contact him at [dwendel@thenalc.org](mailto:dwendel@thenalc.org).***

## NALC LIFE-TO-LIFE: AN EXPERIENCE IN DISCIPLESHIP FOR CONGREGATIONS

***By Pastor David Keener***

In March we made available a new tool designed to teach and encourage congregational members to do the ministry of the Great Commission. The initial feedback that we have received is very positive.

It is our desire that every congregation in the North American Lutheran Church commit to being a discipling congregation.

If it is your desire to be more intentional in your mission and outreach, the manual can be downloaded for free by clicking the “Getting Started” button on the bottom of the NALC Life-to-Life Discipleship webpage, [nalclifetolife.org](http://nalclifetolife.org).

We also have a limited number of printed copies of the manual which can be ordered at a cost of \$40 each. Please make checks payable to the North American Lutheran Church with “Discipleship book” in the memo line. Mail the check to: NALC; PO Box 806565; Minneapolis, MN 55486-0565. Be sure to include your address for shipping.

The video links needed for the studies are embedded in the pdf version of the manual so you will need to download the pdf version even if you order a printed copy.

Our hope is that every congregation and member of the North American Lutheran Church will accept this call to intentional discipleship.



# FRESH EYES FOR MISSION SUMMITS

In recent weeks, five “Fresh Eyes for Mission Summits” have happened as congregations in different places, with different needs have all participated in the process aimed at renewal, revitalization and re-energizing.

Some congregations need to re-engage after the pandemic. Some congregations are strong and stable but lack clear vision for mission looking forward. Other congregations have been too accepting of decline and stagnation and are committing to new life and new direction. The size, context and realities of congregations in the NALC are many and varied, as are those congregations scheduling and participating in “Fresh Eyes for Mission Summits.”

Participant comments from recent summits help to better understand the “Fresh Eyes for Mission Summit” process, goals and outcomes:

**Burt:** “This is an outstanding process and certainly helped us to understand our potential and the needs. I would highly recommend this program to all churches in the NALC. Believe it or not, our attendance is up more than 25 percent since having the ‘Fresh Eyes for Mission Summit.’”

**Roger:** “St John’s has been concerned for several years about our future as the congregation has aged



*“Fresh Eyes for Mission Summit” participants at St. Paul’s Lutheran Church in Bucyrus, Ohio.*



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and declined in numbers. It was exciting to learn about the ‘Fresh Eyes for Mission Summit.’ The questions we were asked to consider were difficult but were answered honestly and with great insight by our participants. Healthy discussion ensued as thoughts and possibilities were written down. From these possibilities, we were deftly guided into creating a vision for mission and meaningful action steps. All in attendance are excited about St John’s future and grateful for the ‘Fresh Eyes for Mission Summit.’”

**John:** “The demographic information was very, very enlightening. I think it caused us to think and question some of our long-held difficult assumptions of where we’ve been and where we need to go, and putting these steps down on paper will give us some things to really aim at and execute.”

**Julie:** “For me, it was very helpful to have this structure. We’ve been talking about this for months — we’ve needed to reorganize and regroup and thinking about trying to plan a strategic session, but doing that ourselves was kind of daunting. Having this resource, having someone come in and facilitate that for us with a set “recipe” was very beneficial, but not so structured that it funneled us in a certain direction.”

**Dean:** “It’s called a ‘Fresh Eyes for Mission Summit’ and is appropriately named because it opens your eyes to things you may not have thought about — to alternatives we may not have thought about in the past, it’s kind of an awakening.”

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**Joan:** “I came in thinking — I don’t know what I was thinking. I guess I thought, ‘We’re not going to get kids in here because we’re grandmas and grandpas.’ I wasn’t sure which way we should go. We think we are like an ‘end of life’ church — and this past year, we’ve lost so many people in the church, that was my sense. Now, I see we can reach out to seniors, we are not ‘end of life,’ there are other things we can do other than rock music — it’s opened my eyes to a different path.”

**Robert:** “The demographic information probably has given me the greatest encouragement, because there were some things I didn’t realize were going on, and we’ve learned in the next five years, there’s going to be considerable growth in our community, so the community is changing and we have a great opportunity to minister to a new group of people and we don’t have to be concerned about the historical memory of us — we can create a new church.”

**Charlie:** “This summit is a good idea, especially with the group process — I learned I need to listen to other viewpoints. It’s helped us to have open eyes and have conversation.”

**Ruth:** “The ‘Fresh Eyes for Mission Summit’ approach — I wondered about it, but it was free, so why not? It’s good to take a look at ourselves. We were active before, but so much has been let go, so this is almost like starting over.”



**“Fresh Eyes for Mission Summit” at Grace Lutheran Church in Westerville, Ohio.**



**“Fresh Eyes for Mission Summit” at Zion Lutheran Church in Skanee, Michigan.**

**Francis:** “I think this has helped us to realize new ways we can reach out to, support and care for children, youth and families — even though we are an older congregation.”

**Bonnie:** “The ‘Fresh Eyes for Mission Summit’ certainly helped to energize the congregation and the church council. I think Lainey said it best during lunch when she told me we’ve been spinning our wheels and this process gave us a real sense of direction. We now have a plan.”

**Jim:** “I think the pre-work on the demographics was really key — really important. I think we could’ve gone in a different direction if we hadn’t had that information and discussion last night. We could’ve become more inward focused. Instead, we focused on what we need to do to reach out, going forward.”

**Art:** “I knew there were some things we needed to focus on, so I was looking forward to the summit. But I thought it really clarified what are our strengths going forward, and because it was so clarifying, it was hopeful, that we can make change that are meaningful and will help us grow.”

**Fred:** “I’ve always been very skeptical of this kind of process. I’ve rarely been involved with any that were successful to any meaningful degree. I think this will be a welcome change to that pattern. I enjoyed the integration and synergy, addressing these issues in a group forum. I’ve had occasion to work with you all in your own separate areas, in a stove-pipe kind of way and I was honestly very surprised how far off I was on

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some of my pre-conceived notions of where you all would fall on a lot of these issues. So that was incredibly eye-opening and I think that alone was worth the time!”

**Pastor:** “You accomplished exactly what I hoped you would. You opened our eyes to the possibilities. It often takes an outside person who is independent to awaken people to look objectively at what the possibilities are. You did that very effectively.”

“Fresh Eyes for Mission Summits” include congregational pre-work aimed at assessing current reality, making use of local data and MapDash Demographic Profiles provided by the NALC. The summits begin on Friday and end with worship on Sunday morning. Participant groups have been as small as nine and as many as 24 people. The larger the participant group in a congregation, the better the input and ownership of the vision and actions steps. There is no cost to congregational participation in a “Fresh Eyes for Mission Summit.”

Summits have been completed recently with Grace Lutheran Church and Our Savior’s Lutheran Church, Menno, South Dakota; St. Michael’s Lutheran

Church, Hamburg, Pennsylvania; St. John’s Lutheran Church, Statesville, North Carolina; Zion Lutheran Church, Skanee, Michigan; St. Paul’s Lutheran Church, Bucyrus, Ohio and Grace Lutheran Church, Westerville, Ohio.

Upcoming “Fresh Eyes for Mission Summits” are scheduled for Holy Trinity Lutheran Church, Troutman, North Carolina; Emmanuel Lutheran Church, State College, Pennsylvania; Zion Lutheran Church, Groveport, Ohio; St. Mark’s Lutheran Church, Fort Wayne, Indiana; Prince of Peace Lutheran Church, Fayetteville, Georgia; Miller’s Lutheran Church, Hickory, North Carolina; First Lutheran Church, West Palm Beach, Florida; and Bethel Lutheran Church, Santa Maria, California.

Weekends after Labor Day are still open for summits in 2022. Contact Pastor David Wendel, assistant to the bishop for ministry and ecumenism, at [dwendel@thenalc.org](mailto:dwendel@thenalc.org) to schedule an informational conversation with your church council or to schedule a “Fresh Eyes for Mission Summit” in your congregation.

***Pastor David Wendel is the assistant to the bishop for ministry and ecumenism. You may contact him at [dwendel@thenalc.org](mailto:dwendel@thenalc.org).***

## NALC DISASTER RESPONSE UPDATE

NALC Disaster Response is responding to the Kentucky tornadoes which occurred on Dec. 10, 2021, in addition to Hurricane Ida that struck Louisiana on Sept. 4, 2021. Mission trips are scheduled in both states for the summer, and NALC Disaster Response is booking trips for the fall months at this time.

The most significant need is school kits and backpacks. The Mayfield, Kentucky, donations center is trying to obtain up to 3,000 empty backpacks for area students when the new school year begins. Lots of school supplies are being delivered from major corporations, but no backpacks are available to fill. NALC Disaster Response has committed to providing 500 empty backpacks and volunteers from the Carolinas Mission Region to fill them.

Donations management is a significant part of NALC Disaster Response. When disasters strike, store shelves are emptied, and material goods are needed to help families start the clean up and recovery process.

Regional disaster warehouses are in need of filled backpacks for future disasters and NALC Disaster Response is scheduling “Stuff the Truck” events to collect items at this time.

If you would like to schedule a “Stuff the Truck” event or for more information, please contact Mary Bates, disaster response coordinator, at 740-509-1132 or [disasterresponse@thenalc.org](mailto:disasterresponse@thenalc.org). You can learn more online at [thenalc.org/nalc-disaster-response](https://thenalc.org/nalc-disaster-response).