



# 2022 MISSION CONVOCATION MEETS ONLINE, ELECTS LEADERS, APPROVES BUDGET

The 2022 Mission Convocation of the North American Lutheran Church met online for three hours on Friday, Aug. 5.

The 360 delegates were able to vote and to join in discussion using their computer or mobile device. Visitors were able to watch the convocation through streaming video.

The meeting was held online as part of the NALC's transition to holding convocations every other year.

The actions by the convocation delegates were limited to the election of leaders for the NALC and North American Lutheran Seminary and the approval of a budget for 2023.

The convocation also received live, video-taped and written reports. Bishop Dan Selbo's report included a video presentation on the life and mission of the NALC. The ministry report video may be viewed online at [thenalc.org](http://thenalc.org). Written reports for the convocation are available online at [lutheranweek.com/materials](http://lutheranweek.com/materials).

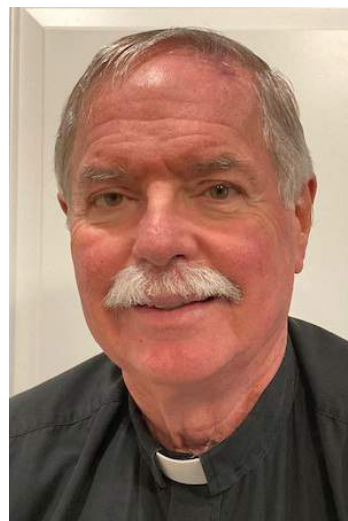
Jerry Roehr of Winnipeg, Manitoba, a member of St. Peter's Evangelical Lutheran Church in Winnipeg, and the Rev. Theresa Jacobson of Grace Lutheran



*Theresa Jacobson*



*Jerry Roehr*



*George Black*



*Ronald Hoyum*

*Continued on Page 2*

*Continued from Page 1*

Church in Thornville, Ohio, were elected to three-year terms on the NALC Executive Council.

The Executive Council functions as the board of directors for the NALC, providing leadership for the church between annual convocations.



**Lynnae Douglas**



**Richard Jansak**



**Stephane Kalonji**

The Rev. Dr. George E. Black of Our Savior Lutheran Church in Auburn, California, and the Rev. Ronald Hoyum of Port Madison Lutheran Church on Bainbridge Island, Washington, were elected to three-year terms on the Court of Adjudication.

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.

Lynnae Douglas of Emmanuel Evangelical Lutheran Church in Export, Pennsylvania; Richard Jansak of Holy Trinity Lutheran Church in Gastonia, North Carolina; and the Rev. Dr. Stephane Kalonji of St. Paul Lutheran Church in Rosenberg, Texas, were elected to five-year terms on the Board of Regents of the North American Lutheran Seminary (NALS).

The Board of Regents is made up of nine members, 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 and fundraising.

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 transition to having convocations every other year.



**Bishop Dan Selbo presides at the 2022 NALC Mission Convocation from the studio at Trinity School for Ministry in Ambridge, Pennsylvania.**

*Continued on Page 3*



*Continued from Page 2*

The convocation heard financial reports and approved a \$3.56 million budget for 2023. The treasurer's report and budget are available on the NALC website at [thenalc.org/financial-reports](https://thenalc.org/financial-reports).

The 2023 budget combines the Operating Budget with the budgets of the church's designated funds – the Theological Education Fund, Great Commission Fund and Disaster Response Fund. Previously separate budgets were approved for each fund.

Michael Johnson, NALC treasurer, also reported that work is in progress to create the NALC Foundation. The foundation would allow the NALC to receive larger gifts intended to be spent over time.

The Today, Tomorrow & Forever initiative of the NALC's 2020 Vision was officially launched during the convocation. This fundraising initiative is the financial component of the 2020 Vision. The initiative hopes to raise \$5 million to provide the resources needed to turn the 2020 Vision into reality.

Through this initiative, the NALC is asking pastors, congregations, mission districts and individuals to step out in faith and to help raise \$5 million above and beyond what the NALC is already expecting to



***Deacon Andrew Ames Fuller, NALC director of communications, works with Ariel Wicker and Pastor Tony Ede to resolve technical difficulties during the convocation.***

receive through regular giving over the next three years. This increased level of funding will not only strengthen the financial foundation of the church but will also enable the NALC to make a number of ministry and mission commitments.

You can learn more about the Today, Tomorrow & Forever initiative online at [thenalc.org/vision](https://thenalc.org/vision). Also watch for information and opportunities to give coming through your congregation.

Dr. David Luy, the newly appointed associate professor of systematic theology for the North American Lutheran Seminary, was the featured devotional leader for the convocation. The video of Dr. Luy's devotion on Hebrews 12:1-3 is available online at [thenalc.org](https://thenalc.org).

Documents, photos and videos from the 2022 NALC Mission Convocation are posted online at [thenalc.org](https://thenalc.org). A video recording of the entire convocation is also available online.

Lutheran Week for 2023 is scheduled for Aug. 7-11, 2023, in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma. The 2023 NALC Mission Convocation will be Aug. 9-11. The other events of Lutheran Week – including the Braaten-Benne Lectures in Theology, Women of the NALC Annual Gathering and a youth ministry gathering – are also planned for 2023.



***The convocation elections team watching voting results come in electronically.***





*Pastor Tony Ede and Ariel Wicker ran slides, videos and voting for the convocation.*



*Mike Johnson, NALC treasurer, and Pastor Amy Little, NALC general secretary, await their turn to present to the convocation.*

# 2022 MISSION CONVOCATION BEHIND THE SCREEN



*Pastor Carl Johnson and Pastor Matthew Vatalare oversaw the election process for the convocation.*



*The technology team for the convocation posed for a group photo. They are from left, Aaron Benson, Maddie Benson, Deacon Andrew Ames Fuller, Ariel Wicker, Alana Brooks and Pastor Tony Ede.*



# BISHOP SELBO'S REPORT TO THE 2022 MISSION CONVOCATION

As I begin my report, I want to start by offering a word of thanks to each of you, as pastors and leaders in the Church, for your support and your encouragement and your prayers for me and for our staff in the roles we share together. I continue to be humbled by the many ways in which I know and see and experience, firsthand, how you, on a regular basis, are keeping us in prayer and supporting our shared ministry.

I also want to thank you for your faithful ministry and for your commitment to serving the people in your congregations and communities, day in and day out. The work you are doing is touching lives in ways you may never see or know. The impact of our collective work, throughout the NALC, led and guided by our Lord Jesus Christ and inspired by the Holy Spirit, is changing lives now and for eternity.

As you go about your daily tasks and work to stay faithful to the calling you have in Jesus, don't ever forget that this Church belongs to Him and He has promised to work through you and through us as we respond in faith to the calling we have received from our Lord.

These past couple of years have not been easy ones for any of us. The adjustments we've all had to make during the pandemic were ones for which most of our pastors were not prepared. All of the online preaching and teaching and interacting — even though we have all, out of necessity, figured it out — has, nonetheless, taken a toll.

As pastor to the pastors, I need to tell you that if you need time away, make sure you take it. If you need to step away and regroup, be sure to make it happen. Reach out if we can help. Reach out to me if you need to talk. Your congregations and families will be better for it. If you're hurting, it'll show. If you're not in a good place for yourself, you'll be less than effective in helping and caring for those you've



## FROM THE BISHOP

REV. DR. DAN SELBO  
BISHOP

---

been called to serve. Whatever it takes, you need to make and take the time.

Similarly, I know that these past couple of years have been challenging for our congregations. Many, within our faith communities, have pulled back from their regular involvement. The patterns that had kept them engaged were forced with the pandemic, understandably, to change. As a result, new patterns that now keep them away have emerged and those new patterns are ones that may take some time to reverse.

My encouragement to all of you, pastors and leaders alike, is to focus your energies on the basics of the Christian life and what it means for us to be the Church. In so doing, you may need to let go of all of the many other good things you might have done and are still doing which can easily distract and get in the way. If we're going to be effective in reaching the world around us, we need to be caring for each other and collectively focusing on the things that count.

If I were serving a congregation today, I'd be visiting the people, working with leaders to find ways to bring the congregation together to rebuild a sense of community, and sticking with the basics of worship, Bible classes and discipleship groups. And, in the process, I'd be covering the entire ministry with an increased level of prayer and a constant reminder to our people that we exist not to serve

*Continued on Page 6*

*Continued from Page 5*

ourselves but to serve the purposes of Christ. I'd do everything I could to help re-engage the members in a way that was not focused inwardly upon ourselves but outwardly upon the community and the people around us for whom our Lord gave His life.

As I travel around our denomination and have opportunities to interact with and see the work happening in our congregations, I have to say that I am hopeful for our future. Our pastors are faithful. The authority of the Scriptures and the Lutheran Confessions are being upheld. Our preaching and our witness to the world, without exception, is centered in the life, death and resurrection of our Lord Jesus for the sins and salvation of all people.

Not only that, but our denomination's Core Values are not just four nice-sounding two-word descriptions that make us feel good about who we are. They are alive and being lived out, and they are serving as the foundation for the ministry and the mission we are doing in the name of Jesus.

Add to that our commitment, as a church body, to the Great Commandments and Great Commission of our Lord, and the priority we have given to His call to be and to make disciples of all people, and there are more than enough reasons for me and for us to believe that our future, in the hands of God, is promising and secure. I truly am, with good reason, hopeful for our future, and I am hope-filled that God will continue to lead and guide us in the years ahead.

I also realize, as we all do, that the North American Lutheran Church is anything but a perfect church body. We are still young, still growing, still trying in many ways to figure it out. Made up of sinners like myself and each of you, how would we hope for and expect anything else? Until the day our Lord returns and calls us all home and creates and recreates what His intent and will for our world and our lives were at the start, the sin-resulting challenges we face will be a reality for our shared witness and life for as long as we remain in this world.

Having said that, God has promised to work through His Church, to work through us, as we seek to be



***Bishop Selbo at the 2022 NALC Mission Convocation***

faithful to Him. It is upon that promise that we build our shared life, and it is upon our shared life in Christ that we continue to rest our faith.

### **Challenges we face in the NALC**

This is a challenging time to be the Church. And I, honestly, do not see it becoming easier in the years ahead. We need each other if we're going to remain strong, and we will continue to need each other, trusting in the guidance of the Holy Spirit, if our lives and our shared ministries are to produce the kind of life-bearing fruit our Lord is wanting to find.

Go down the list, independent of the pandemic, and it's obvious we cannot do this on our own. The culture in which we live, throughout North America, is moving further away from the Judeo-Christian morals and values upon which our nations were formed and in which most of us grew up. The political climate of our countries, in spite of the many things that are good, is often doing more to divide its people than unite.

The violence in our communities, the addictions that exist with alcohol and drugs and pornography and

***Continued on Page 7***



## ***Continued from Page 6***

the like; the increasing numbers of people struggling with mental health issues; more broken homes and families; more confusion about marriage and sexual identity and about how we were all, when we were brought into this life, created to be who we are in the image and likeness of God — to say nothing of the fact that it's becoming harder to even talk with other people about our differences, afraid that our differing ways of thinking and living in this world might turn those who were once friends into something else and less.

Not only that, but we are in the midst of a spiritual war. I am more convinced of that today than ever. The closer we align ourselves with the Scriptures and the more dedicated we become, which we are, to following our Lord Jesus as disciples and working to help others do the same, the more directly and the more intentionally, the deceiver, the enemy, Satan himself will be on the attack. He wants nothing more than to discourage and dissuade those of us who are standing out and against, in the name of Jesus, the culture in which we live.

This is a challenging time to be the Church. To pretend that we're on a track that is soon to get easier is to put our head in the sand and to somehow become convinced that the emperor is wearing beautiful clothes. It's not the case. It's not real. The challenges we face are not easy and they are not going away.

### **Opportunities we have**

At the same time, I am also convinced that it's an opportunistic time to be the Church. The world in which we live is confused. It's searching for answers and can't find them. It's looking for real and lasting hope, but it's looking in places and for possibilities where it is either short-lived or where it will never be found.

We know the answer and His name is Jesus. We know where real and lasting hope exists and is found, and His name is Christ. Jesus said, "I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all to people to myself" (John 12:32). That's His promise. That's what He has been doing and will continue to do,

from the time He died on the cross for our sin until that day when He returns to claim us as His own.

Our calling is to lift up Jesus, to stay focused on the work He has called us to do, to be and to make disciples for Him, and to never lose sight of the promise that when we do, He will build and grow His Church.

### **NALC 2020 Vision**

Turn back the clock, just a few years, and we began developing the framework for what we have since been referring to as our 2020 Vision. Working with our staff and elected leaders, taking a hard and a critical look at where we had been in the first 10 years of our existence and where we believed God was leading us in the years ahead, collaborating with our seminary president and our mission district deans, remembering our four Core Values and our commitment to our Lord's commandments and commission, and throughout the process, seeking to hear and to listen and to pay attention to the voice of God, we came up with a 10-point strategic plan that has since enabled us to set goals and priorities for our shared work for the coming years.

At our first online convocation, two years ago, we presented the 2020 Vision. There was an obvious connection in the Vision's name with the year in which it was being presented — 2020. There was also an intentional connection with the name insofar as we believed, and still do, that this is the clearest 20/20 vision we have for what we see and trust God is leading us to do. Unsolicited, a motion came from the floor to adopt the vision as presented, which resulted in an overwhelming vote of support for moving forward with the strategic plan, which is exactly what we have been doing ever since.

And that's why, for the past two years, we have been working tirelessly to implement the plans and strategies outlined in the vision we believe God has set before us. Even as some of our progress has been slowed down with the pandemic, God has been faithful to His promises and has never slowed down in carrying out His work.

***Continued on Page 8***



**Bishop Dan Selbo helps with cleanup following the 2022 NALC Mission Convocation.**

### ***Continued from Page 7***

And so, what has been happening in the NALC over the past few years? How has God been working, where are we at today, and what are the signs that our shared work is being blessed?

Rather than go through the list myself, highlighting what I believe God has been doing, and instead of using our time to allow each of our staff and leaders to offer their reports, I'd like you to turn your attention to what will be a summary report, a firsthand look, at some of the ways and means through which God has been active in the NALC.

***A video report was played at this time during the bishop's report. You may view it online at [thenalc.org](https://thenalc.org).***

### **Closing**

The Lord continues to bless our work as a denomination and is actively working in and through our congregations and ministries to change and transform lives for eternity. Thank you to Pastor Alliyah Greaver, serving at St. John Lutheran Church in Greenville, Ohio, and to Jacob Ogelsby, director of youth and family ministries at Black Forest Lutheran Church in Colorado Springs, Colorado, for

being the presenters in this Mission Convocation summary video.

The video presentation will be available on our website for you to share with others, in congregations and mission district gatherings, as well as with anyone interested in learning more about our life and work in the NALC. We pray it will serve as a welcomed resource for us as we seek, in all we do, to be faithful to Christ.

Before closing my report, there are several people I would like to recognize. First, I want to publicly thank our NALC and NALS staff for their hard work and their ongoing support. Their faithful leadership and commitment to working as a team enables me and us to serve the congregations and pastors, mission and ministry partners, in efficient and effective ways.

I also want to offer a word of thanks to our mission district deans, as well as to Pastor Mark Daniels who, for the past few years, has served as their convener. Our deans serve as an extension to my office by providing support and care for the pastors and congregations in their respective mission districts. They serve without compensation, while, at the same time, in most cases, serve their own congregations. My words can only begin to express how thankful I am for each of them and for the work they do on our behalf.

Finally, thank you to those who have served in elected positions; most notably, those who are soon completing their terms. On the Executive Council, Mr. Dick Jansak and Pastor Melinda Jones; on the Board of Regents, Mrs. Donna Evans, Pastor Jeffray Greene, and Mr. Roger Weyersberg; and completing their terms on the Court of Adjudication, Mr. Jim Gale and Pastor John Moffett.

I want to ask for your continued prayers for Pastor Phil Gagnon who has been on disability leave for the past few months and is now about two thirds of the way through chemotherapy treatments to address a cancerous growth near his kidneys and spinal column. The treatments appear to be effective as the pain he is experiencing is diminishing. I'd ask for

***Continued on Page 9***



# ORDINATIONS



*Pastor George Schrader was ordained on July 10 at New Life Lutheran Church in Menomonie, Wisconsin, where he serves as pastor.*

*Continued from Page 8*

your continuing prayer for full and complete healing for this dear partner and brother in Christ.

I also want to take a moment to recognize those pastors who, during this past year, have been called home to the Lord and have now entered the Church Triumphant. We remember and honor their earthly ministry and lives.

- + The Rev. Brett Collins
- + The Rev. William Haggis
- + The Rev. James Hanson
- + The Rev. Barry Kendall
- + The Rev. Robert Kitchen
- + The Rev. David Steffenson
- + The Rev. Elizabeth Toler

To all of you, once again, thank you for your prayers, for your continued support, and for your commitment to the Gospel of Jesus Christ. It remains a joy and an honor and a privilege to serve as your bishop.

*The video presentation that was a part of Bishop Selbo's report may be viewed online at [thenalc.org](http://thenalc.org).*



*Pastor Shruti Kulkarni was ordained on Sept. 9 at Immanuel Lutheran Church in New York City. She is called to serve as a pastor of River's Edge Ministries in Mount Airy, Maryland.*

## ERIC RIESEN BOOK IN SECOND EDITION

The Rev. Dr. Eric Riesen, president of the North American Lutheran Seminary, has released a second edition of his book, *The Christian Faith: A Catechism for the Curious*.

"In an unguarded, winsome and courageous way, Eric Riesen presents the basic truths of the Christian faith from a Lutheran perspective. Open to the mystery at the core of faith, along with its gracious, transformative power, he challenges those secular assumptions which sideline questions of ultimate meaning and the reality of God, resulting in a spiritual restlessness for many. Those reared in the faith, along with newcomers and older youth, will find their faith strengthened, enriched, and empowered as they join Riesen in an exploration of fundamental Lutheran teachings in an accessible and satisfying way" said the Rev. Dr. Mark Mattes of Grand View University in endorsing the book.

Dr. Riesen's book is available for purchase at [amazon.com](http://amazon.com).

# TODAY, TOMORROW & FOREVER FUNDRAISING INITIATIVE LAUNCHED AT CONVOCATION

The Today, Tomorrow & Forever NALC-wide initiative was launched at the 2022 Mission Convocation.

This is the financial component to our strategic plan and 2020 Vision that will provide the resources needed to turn our God-given vision into a reality.

Through this initiative, we are asking pastors, congregations, mission districts and individuals throughout the NALC to step out in faith and to help us raise \$5 million above and beyond what we are already expecting to receive through our regular giving over the next three years.

This increased level of funding will not only strengthen the financial foundation of our church body but will also enable the ministry and mission commitments we are making to happen.

The 2020 Vision provides the pathway to ensuring a legacy of faith today, tomorrow and forever in all NALC congregations through four primary objectives:

**Grow** – To ensure long-term vitality and fruitfulness for our congregations, we must constantly adapt and expand the reach of Jesus Christ by carrying out Christ’s great commission. *Grow* places importance on our ability to expand and mature as congregations of the NALC.

**Serve** – We recognize the fundamental role that strong theological formation plays in the capacity of our congregations to carry out faithful mission work as we thrive and live out God’s word. *Serve* – one of the four main components of this vision – lays



***Bishop Dan Selbo and Pastor Amy Little, general secretary, launch the Today, Tomorrow & Forever initiative during the 2022 NALC Mission Convocation.***

out the pathway for empowering all NALC congregations to form healthy, authentic Christian communities that serve our world.

**Renew** – Even with the best congregational strategies, our community needs the periodic opportunity to reaffirm its roots while looking ahead to the future. *Renew* – one of the four main components of this vision – provides opportunities for all NALC congregations to be renewed by the Holy Spirit.

**Fulfill** – Our calling as Christians and congregations in the North American Lutheran Church is much larger than ourselves. We belong to a legacy of faith. Through the 2020 Vision, our congregations devote themselves to join God in His work to *Fulfill* His promises, taking with them our call to

***Continued on Page 11***





# NORTH AMERICAN LUTHERAN CHURCH



TO ENSURE A LEGACY OF FAITH TODAY, TOMORROW & FOREVER

## **Continued from Page 10**

discipleship and our Core Values as we continue the legacy of faith.

You may access all of the Today, Tomorrow & Forever materials at [www.thenalc.org/vision](http://www.thenalc.org/vision). There you can download educational materials and find the latest initiative updates.

## **Ways to Get Involved**

### **Roundtable Meetings**

Wondering how your congregation can engage in the NALC's 2020 Vision to ensure a legacy of faith Today, Tomorrow & Forever?

To answer questions, you may have about the initiative and how to launch it within your congregation, we will be offering a series of roundtable meetings over Zoom led by Pastor Amy

Little, NALC general secretary, and Mike Schmidt of Cramer & Associates. We will also go through the toolkit materials that were mailed to congregations and how to best implement them.

We encourage you to join us! The next Roundtable Meetings are scheduled for Thursday, Oct. 6, and Wednesday, Oct. 19, at noon ET. Contact [communications@thenalc.org](mailto:communications@thenalc.org) for the meeting information.

### **Prayer Partnership**

The bishop and NALC leadership invite pastors and members of their congregations to partner with us as we pray with one voice for the 2020 Vision.

This vision is utilizing the NALC strengths and resources to ensure the goal of fulfilling the four Core Values: Christ Centered, Mission Driven, Traditionally Grounded and Congregationally Focused.

We are asking you to make a serious commitment to pray. This will provide a strong spiritual voice of unity to our vision's success in service to our congregations. Please consider making a pledge to pray for our families, our congregations, our leaders, our mission and ministry as we move forward with the 2020 Vision.

To join the prayer partnership, please visit [thenalc.org/vision](http://thenalc.org/vision).

## **CONGREGATIONS SEEKING PASTORS**

You may find a list of congregations seeking pastors at [thenalc.org/call-process](http://thenalc.org/call-process).

# ENCOURAGING YOUR CONGREGATION TO GREATER MISSIONAL AWARENESS

Martin Luther wrote, “But know that to serve God is nothing else than to serve your neighbor and do good to him in love.”

In the North American Lutheran Church, mission is part of our DNA, and mission is simply serving in the name of Christ. Our congregations exist to share the love of Christ with our neighbors near and far, and there are endless ways we can do that. We are only limited by our imagination!

A question that often comes up in congregations is “How can we become more mission oriented?”

The answer to that doesn't have to require expensive trips overseas, though mission trips are transformational for us and for those we visit. It can be as simple as focusing in on a different aspect of mission each month and mentioning it every Sunday in worship.

For example, your church leaders could take a look at the calendar and decide what will be the mission focus each month for a whole year. Perhaps, in September, you ask everyone to bring in gifts cards to help local families with school supplies or new school clothes.

In October, you might choose a local ministry such as a food bank or homeless shelter and collect items needed for that ministry.

Maybe, in November, you adopt a few families who need food for Thanksgiving.

December is always an easy month to be missional as Christmas is a focus for nearly all families no matter if they are Christian or not.

See how easy it can be to direct the faithful toward mission? By engaging in specific projects or ministries each month, the church becomes mission minded – looking outside the walls of the building and into the kingdom of God.



FROM THE  
GENERAL SECRETARY

REV. DR. AMY LITTLE  
GENERAL SECRETARY

---

Be creative! Get together and ask for ideas from throughout the whole congregation. This is a way you can get everyone involved and support some of the ministries that are vital in your community. It also engages individuals and families when they see that the church cares about the things they care about.

Need some more ideas? How about these: send gifts and notes to a local nursing home; write letters to a global mission school somewhere far away; collect funds to pay for a child's tuition somewhere else in the world; send treats to the local school teachers with notes of support and encouragement for their vocational endeavors; collect canned goods or non-perishables for a local charity; collect coins for NALC Disaster Response; ask for volunteers to work on a Habitat for Humanity house or a shut-in's home that needs repairs; tag onto the good things that others are doing (no need to reinvent the wheel); have a community dinner and invite your neighbors.

The point is, it's simple to do mission. We make things way more complicated than they have to be. Just make a plan and do it. God will be honored in your efforts.

***Pastor Amy Little is the NALC general secretary. You may contact her at [alittle@thenalc.org](mailto:alittle@thenalc.org).***



# YOUNG ADULTS DISCIPLESHIP GROUP

Bishop Dan Selbo has said, "Disciples of Jesus are not born but are made." The vision of the North American Lutheran Church is that every member of the NALC come to know and believe and trust that the calling and commission Jesus gave to His first followers and, ultimately, to His Church is one that belongs also to them.

The best place to start a life-long discipleship journey is when you are young. For this reason, Pastor Teresa Peters will be leading an NALC Life-to-Life Discipleship group starting this fall for young adults ages 16 to 25 who want to dig deeper into their faith and begin an intentional journey of discipleship.

This will be an opportunity to work through the new NALC discipleship book together with others of the same age demographic throughout the United States and Canada. Each young person will then be paired with a mentor in their congregation or surrounding area with whom to continue their discipleship journey.

If you or someone in your congregation might be interested, please contact Pastor Peters as soon as possible so that the group can begin.

## Other Youth and Family Ministry Happenings

Join the "NALC Youth and Family Workers" group on Facebook.

Sunday school teachers, youth workers, pastors and anyone who works with youth and families can connect on Zoom on the second Thursday of each



## YOUTH AND FAMILY

REV. TERESA PETERS  
DIRECTOR OF YOUTH  
AND FAMILY MINISTRY

month at 8 p.m. ET, and the fourth Thursday of each month at 11 a.m. ET.

On the Holy Families website, [holyfamilytime.com](http://holyfamilytime.com), there is a tab called "Leaders Resources." Here you will find resources created by Sunday school teachers, youth leaders and pastors throughout the NALC that are there for you to use. There is not much there yet but check back often.

If you have resources you have created and are willing to share, please send them to Pastor Peters.

Watch for information in the next NALC News from Melanie Corn who is consulting as a youth and family specialist in the area of mission district day camps.

Pastor Teresa Peters is available for consultation on ways to equip and support young people, as well as selecting curriculum, and is also willing to lead a workshop for your mission district or mission region regarding Youth and Family Ministry.

***Pastor Teresa Peters is the director of Youth and Family Ministry for the NALC. You may contact her at [tpeters@thenalc.org](mailto:tpeters@thenalc.org).***

## LET'S KEEP IN TOUCH

Rev. Dr. David J. Baer, *editor*  
North American Lutheran Church  
2655 Innsbruck Drive, Suite A  
New Brighton, MN 55112-9304  
+1-651-633-6004 | [news@thenalc.org](mailto:news@thenalc.org)



NORTH AMERICAN  
LUTHERAN  
CHURCH

*Please copy and share this newsletter widely.*

# PASTOR JEFF MORLOCK CALLED AS DIRECTOR OF VOCATIONAL DISCERNMENT

The Rev. Jeff Morlock of Galloway, Ohio, has been called as director of vocational discernment and recruitment manager for the North American Lutheran Seminary (NALS).

His role includes developing a strategy to identify, encourage and recruit discerning candidates for the seminary.

Pastor Morlock graduated from Capital University in Columbus, Ohio, with a Bachelor of Social Work and received his Masters of Divinity degree from Trinity Lutheran Seminary there.

He has served three congregations in and around the Columbus area since 1997, most recently on the staff of Upper Arlington Lutheran Church for nine years, and prior to that, as a church planter.

Pastor Jeff has been married to Pastor Patti Morlock for 30 years. They have two grown daughters, Bekah and Hannah. Bekah and her fiancé, Miles, are both admissions counselors for small, private, Catholic universities, and a great resource for Jeff as he begins this work.

"I appreciate the NALS seminary network, which reflects the Core Values of the NALC in its spiritual formation of students," Pastor Morlock said. "While I wish my own formation had included such consistent orthodoxy, I am grateful for the opportunity to invite those discerning a call to ministry to explore and consider it.



*Pastor Jeff Morlock*

"My love for Jesus, my experiences and passion for raising up the next generation of pastors have prepared me well for this role, and my home congregation has provided numerous ministers of Word and Sacrament for the Church by identifying the gifts of young people in their early teens, including me," he said.

"For 13 years my wife and I supervised students from Trinity Lutheran Seminary at Grace Lutheran in Thornville, Ohio. Also, having served as dean of the Southeast Ohio Mission District, I'm keenly aware of the need for clergy, as seven of our 13

congregations are currently seeking pastoral leadership. Given this high vacancy rate, I initiated a successful campaign in the fall of 2021 to raise the necessary funding to host an NALS internship in our mission district.

"I believe that we care about what we pray about, so I invite all our NALC congregations to regularly include our seminary network in the prayers of the people. Ask the Lord of the harvest to send out workers into his harvest field. And please contact me with the names of young people or career folks who may currently be discerning a call to ordained ministry," he said.

You may contact Pastor Morlock at [jeff.morlock@tsm.edu](mailto:jeff.morlock@tsm.edu).



# UPDATE FROM MEKANE YESUS SEMINARY IN ETHIOPIA FOLLOWING 2021 FLOODING

God can accomplish amazing things, even in the most tumultuous of chapters.

A little over a year ago, on Aug. 17, 2021, an unprecedented flash flood swept through the campus of Mekane Yesus Seminary, the main seminary of the Ethiopian Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus (EECMY). Three children and five adults did not

survive the flood. More than 98 people were displaced. A large part of the institution was badly damaged, including residences for staff. The damage was in the millions of dollars.

Staff and students have since been relocated to temporary living accommodations. Salvageable structures were rehabilitated. Unsalvageable buildings were demolished. The city has re-engineered the water runoff.



*Mekane Yesus Seminary library following the 2021 flooding*

As much progress as they have seen, there is still much more to be done. The rebuilding effort still continues. Plans are underway with a new building for faculty and students. The cost of the building will be in the millions of dollars. The need is still great.

This past year has also been a year of incredible internal unrest for Ethiopia. Skirmishes have flared up in many parts of the country, resulting in deaths, food shortages and even starvation. Add to that the continued toll of the global pandemic.

But even in the midst of adversity, God has been accomplishing the miraculous. The Ethiopian church continues to grow at an exponential rate.



*Mekane Yesus Seminary library cleaned up from the flood damage*

*Continued on Page 16*

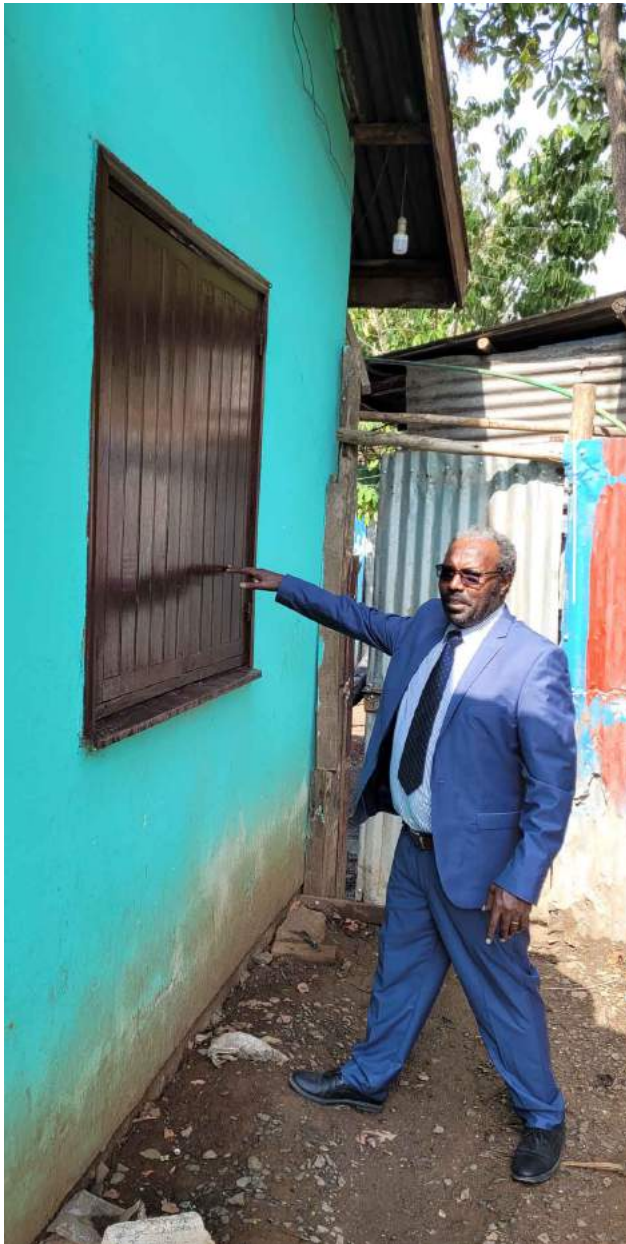


*Continued from Page 15*

At the time of the flood, the seminary had some construction under progress untouched by the flood on the higher portion of the property. The building project came as a result of an imminent need and threat to the seminary.



***Cleanup of the flooded area continues a year later***



***The Rev. Goferie Adisho showed how high the water came at his home.***

In Ethiopia, all land is owned by the government. Over 50 years ago, the government gave permission for the seminary to make use of more than 20 acres on what was then far outside Addis Ababa.

As the city has grown, the area is now a busy center of commerce. If the seminary did not make adequate use of the land, the government would come in and take it from the seminary. Thus, it became clear that significant development needed to take place soon.

A little over five years ago, the Rev. Dr. Bruk Ayele, seminary president, came to the United States for a conference. Pastor John Conrad of the NALC met with him over a meal. In the course of that conversation, the topic of that land and development need was raised.

“That project would take a lot of money. We don’t have a lot of money. We’re in Ethiopia,” Dr. Bruk said. Pastor John responded, “Well, we’re in the United States. It’s probably just a matter of getting the right story in front of the right people.” They prayed about it, and then God really demonstrated what only God can do.

A team of people from both the NALC and EECMY were convened with the purpose of raising funds for the project. A memorandum of understanding was developed with the EECMY. NALC Pastors Mark Braaten and John Conrad were a part of the team with John serving as chair. The team met regularly via Zoom and in person. Lutheran Bible Translators joined in the effort as part of the facility would be used for their work in Ethiopia and beyond.

***Continued on Page 17***



*Continued from Page 16*

It was estimated the project would run \$3-4 million. Within three years, over \$2.4 million was raised. Construction began and the remaining funds were raised, totaling about \$3.8 million. The building's dedication was this past June. The Rev. Dr. Gemechis Buba, NALC assistant to the bishop for international mission, was also present for the dedication.



*The dedication service took place on the sixth floor of the new building.*

The building is more than 100,000 square feet with seven floors. Two floors are used for Bible translation. Three floors are used for the seminary and its other programs. Two floors are leased out to banks, generating about \$225,000 per year for the seminary.

The words of Ephesians ring powerfully true: "Now to him who by the power at work within us is able to accomplish abundantly far more than all we can ask or imagine, to him be glory

in the church and in Christ Jesus to all generations, forever and ever. Amen" (Ephesians 3:20-21 NRSV).

God continues to do amazing things at Mekane Yesus Seminary. Although the funds from the new building will help, the cost of the much needed building for staff and student housing is still in the millions.

If you would like to hear more of what is happening at the seminary, please contact Pastor Gemechis Buba, Pastor John Conrad or Pastor Mark Braaten. If you would like to see what God is doing in Ethiopia, an NALC trip is scheduled for November.



*Pastor John Conrad and Dr. Bruk Ayele, Mekane Yesus Seminary president, at the dedication*

Prayers are still requested for the EECMY and the Mekane Yesus Seminary. It's not too late to bless what God is doing. Those who would like to help with the rebuilding efforts may send monetary gifts to North American Lutheran Church; P.O. Box 860565; Minneapolis, MN 55486-0565. Please indicate EECMY on the memo line of your check.



*The newly dedicated building at the Mekane Yesus Seminary*

# NEW YORK CONGREGATION USES PASTORS' BOOTH FOR OUTREACH

*By Pastor Gregory Fryer*

This is how I feel when I sit at the Pastors' Booth and watch the people of our neighborhood walk by: "What a Wonderful World!"

I try to image what their day is like – their work, their responsibilities, maybe their self-doubts. I love the variety of races and ages and languages of the people walking by. I try to look at each person. They are our neighbors here at Immanuel Lutheran Church in New York City. So Louis Armstrong's song seems perfect to me:

*I hear babies cry. I watch them grow.  
They'll learn much more than I'll ever know.  
And I think to myself, what a wonderful world!  
Yes, I think to myself, what a wonderful world!*

New Yorkers walk by with a sense of confidence. Many of them smile at me or give me a thumbs up or take a photo of our Pastors' Booth. So, they seem confident and happy. But sometimes they sit down at our Pastors' Booth and burst into tears. That is why Pastor Carol Fryer and I have a box of tissues there.

I have been pastor of Immanuel Lutheran Church in New York City for 30 years now. But it is easier to meet folks if I simply sit on the sidewalk.

"What is on your heart?" That is how I greet people who sit down at the Pastors' Booth. And they do have something on their heart – same as folks across the land. They have hopes and dreams, sorrows and setbacks, uncertainties and fears, joys and adventures lying ahead of them. I try to tell people about Jesus.

Folks expect it of me. I am a clergyman, wearing clergy clothes. Whether the person sitting in front



**Pastor Gregory Fryer and Immanuel Lutheran Church in New York City use a Pastors' Booth based on the Peanuts comic strip as a tool for outreach.**

of me is Christian, Jewish, Muslim or atheist, they expect me to speak of Jesus.

The case of the atheist is especially interesting to me. The atheist tends to boast of his freedom to choose his own values, her own values. And I often find myself saying, "God bless you. I am glad that you are doing well. But I notice that you are young. I wonder how your faith is going to work for you when you become old and frail or when your health breaks down." More than one atheist has considered my question, heard me speak of Jesus, thanked me and left saying that I have given him or her something to think about.

***Continued on Page 19***



*Continued from Page 18*

But most folks do not sit down at the Pastors' Booth because they want to explore their faith or the Christian faith. Rather, they sit down because they need prayer. And so I take their hands and pray with them. The city simply fades away as we pray. It has been a fundamental conviction of mine from the beginning: From time to time, New Yorkers need prayer. And so Pastor Carol and I try to be available to the people of our city.

Our Pastors' Booth is a takeoff on Lucy's psychiatric booth in the Peanuts cartoon. The nickel is just part of the fun. Carol and I talk and pray with people for free. We supply the nickels to drop into the jar. But a fascinating thing is the steady supply of people who drop a donation into the jar. Even if they do not sit down to talk, they drop in a donation and go on their way with a smile on their faces.

I believe the neighborhood likes our Pastors' Booth. They like the pastors being available to folks. Carol and I use the donations to support our



*Pastor Carol Fryer at the Pastors' Booth*



*Bishop Dan Selbo took a turn at the Pastors' Booth while visiting Immanuel Lutheran Church in New York City.*

congregation's "Meals on Heels" program. Half of our volunteers cook meals for frail elderly folks in the neighborhood and the other half walk around on Saturdays delivering the meals. New Yorkers seldom have cars. We walk. And so our program is called "Meals on Heels."

We are the only NALC congregation in New York City, and this is a BIG town. And so Carol and I ask of you: If you should have people in your congregation coming to New York City for education or for work, try to point them to our congregation. We think it is a good and faithful congregation. We are trying to create and sustain faith on earth — faith in Jesus Christ, to whom belongs the glory with the Father and the Holy Spirit now and forever. Amen.

*Pastor Gregory Fryer serves Immanuel Lutheran Church in New York City. You can learn more about the congregation at [immanuelnyc.org](http://immanuelnyc.org).*



# FRESH EYES FOR MISSION SUMMITS

*By Pastor David Wendel*

As congregations continue to participate in the Fresh Eyes for Mission Summits, they are finding exciting possibilities for renewed mission and ministry. Here are a few recent participant comments:

**Andy:** “It’s really opened our eyes! I loved the examples you’ve given. We know we’re disciples, but we don’t know how to be disciples — we need some training in this regard. Going through this process is going to help shape us into a community of disciples.”

**Sara:** “Honestly, I was very uneasy at the onset — but it wasn’t as huge an undertaking as we were worried it was going to be. Much easier than I thought, and for the cost of a few meals, the information we have gleaned is invaluable.”

“If you look at everything that’s written on these newsprint sheets, it’s all relevant to this church — our church — right now. It’s not you — showing up saying here’s an agenda and here’s what you should be focused on. Everything was done through this



*Fresh Eyes for Mission Summit at First Lutheran Church in West Palm Beach, Florida*

group, realizing this is where we are, then figuring out where we go, and then it’s up to us to change it. With the Holy Spirit guiding us, hopefully, we will!”

**Pastor Heidi:** “Exciting, productive and motivational! Amen!”

The Fresh Eyes for Mission Summits are aimed at assisting congregations of various sizes, contexts and realities. Some are needing to re-engage after

*Continued on Page 21*



*Fresh Eyes for Mission Summit at St. Mark’s Lutheran Church in Fort Wayne, Indiana*



*Continued from Page 20*

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 current realities of congregations in the NALC are many and varied, as are those congregations scheduling and participating in Fresh Eyes for Mission Summits.

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. 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.

Fresh Eyes for Mission Summits have recently been completed by Holy Trinity Lutheran Church in Troutman, North Carolina; Emmanuel Lutheran Church in State College, Pennsylvania; Zion



**Fresh Eyes for Mission Summit at Prince of Peace Lutheran Church in Fayetteville, Georgia**

Lutheran Church in Groveport, Ohio; St. Mark’s Lutheran Church in Fort Wayne, Indiana; Prince of Peace Lutheran Church in Fayetteville, Georgia; Miller’s Lutheran Church in Hickory, North Carolina; First Lutheran Church in West Palm Beach, Florida; Bethel Lutheran Church in Lincolnton, North Carolina and Salem Lutheran Church in Salisbury, North Carolina.

This fall, summits will be facilitated at Holy Trinity Lutheran Church in Gastonia, North Carolina; Christ the King Lutheran Church in Yankton, South Dakota and Bethel Lutheran Church in Santa Maria, California.



**Fresh Eyes for Mission Summit at Holy Trinity Lutheran Church in Troutman, North Carolina**

Realizing that Thanksgiving, Advent and Christmas may not be the best times for additional work and gatherings, a number of congregations are now scheduling summits for 2023 and weekends are available.

Contact Pastor David Wendel at [dwendel@thenalc.org](mailto:dwendel@thenalc.org) to schedule an informational Zoom conversation with your church council or to schedule a Fresh Eyes for Mission Summit in your congregation.

# OVERCOMING THE CHALLENGE OF TECHNOLOGY IN FORMING PASTORS

The Rev. Dr. Eric Riesen, president of the North American Lutheran Seminary (NALS), traveled to Westfield House, a Lutheran College of Liberal Arts and Sciences and House of Studies, in Cambridge, England, in May.

Dr. Riesen shared the history of the North American Lutheran Church with the students and the denomination's need to educate and form pastors who share the Lutheran ethos: being Christ Centered, Congregationally Focused, Mission Driven and Traditionally Grounded.

He also shared his personal experience with how, six weeks after accepting the call to be president of the NALS, the COVID-19 pandemic hit, shutting down the campus of Trinity School for Ministry where the NALS Seminary Center is located.

"As events unfolded, we soon realized that problems caused by the pandemic were not limited to technological know-how," Dr. Riesen said. "Pastors were ill prepared and poorly formed theologically to cope with the pressures on ministry caused by a pandemic. For better or worse, the knee-jerk reaction of many pastors was to seek technological solutions to these problems. However, many of these solutions raised theological concerns."

Dr. Riesen then explored problems and possibilities raised by technology for theological education and pastoral formation, which has been excerpted from his address:

## **Three problems raised by technology for theological education and pastoral formation:**

**Community (koinonia) can, and will, suffer from an overdependence on technology.** It is easy to hide behind a computer screen. To use one rather extreme example, in the United States and probably other locations as well, completely virtual congregations are springing up. These congregations



*The Rev. Dr. Eric Riesen, president of the North American Lutheran Seminary*

are made up of congregants that attend virtually via an avatar of themselves. Obviously, the pastor has his or her own avatar as well. What does this mean spiritual and pastoral formation?

An overreliance on virtual, distance, online theological education and pastoral formation may help foster the idolatry of the ideal, **leading to an idealized, or idolized, concept of Christian community.**

We only need to think of Dietrich Bonhoeffer in *Life Together*:

"Innumerable times a whole Christian community has broken down because it had sprung from a wish dream. The serious Christian, set down for the first time in a Christian community, is likely to bring with him a very definite idea of what Christian life together should be and to try to realize it. But God's

*Continued on Page 23*



*Continued from Page 22*

grace speedily shatters such dreams. Just as surely as God's desires to lead us to a knowledge of genuine Christian fellowship, so surely must we be overwhelmed by a great disillusionment with others, with Christians in general, and, if we are fortunate, with ourselves."

In short, virtual church is nice because no one smells funny. Virtual church is easy. You don't have to suffer community.

**An overdependence upon online/virtual education/formation lends itself to excarnation.** Excarnation, according to James K. A. Smith, is a process, "of disembodiment of the Christian faith, turning it into a 'heady' affair that could be boiled down to a message and grasped with the mind ... this was Christianity reduced to something for brains-on-sticks."

It's easy to see that when theological education and pastoral formation are reduced only to conveying ideas which can be grasped by the mind, technology/online/virtual education can seem as good as in-person education.

But, as Smith also notes, "information does not produce transformation."

Rather, we are formed by the story in which we are living. Theological education and pastoral formation are about learning to live in the true story of the world — the Gospel story.

**Three Tactics to Address the Problems:**

**We must develop a robust ecclesiology and sacramental theology** if online and distance theological education and pastoral formation are here to stay. There is simply no substitute for in-person, incarnate, bodily participation in the worship and sacramental life of a congregation.

Regarding the Eucharist, when the pastor consecrates the bread and wine — "This is my body" and "This is the blood of the new covenant"— it is the bread and wine which you see on this altar which is taken into the hands of the presiding

minister. As the Reformers insisted, the Words of Institution do not work *ex opere operato* (by the work worked). The Sacrament cannot be divorced from the entire sacramental action of "take, give thanks, bless and distribute."

**We must develop a robust anthropology.** This goes back to what James Smith said regarding how we treat people as "brains-on-sticks." What is a human being? How do we live fully human lives? Can we live a fully human life as an online avatar? Why is it important to face the realities of life lived among a community of sinners?

Why is the Incarnation of the divine *Logos* (Word) central to our humanity? Why didn't God just give us more information?

Third, as those entrusted with the task of theological education, **we must be intentional about spiritual and pastoral formation in community.** At Trinity School of Ministry, there is a special effort to engage online/distance students in formational practices. Each semester online students are contacted by a faculty person to discuss questions of their personal formational practices and disciplines. Not ideas "about" formation, but practices "of" formation — practices such as worship, prayer, devotional reading of Scripture, involvement in a worshipping community, and confession and absolution.

## NALC RESPONDS TO HURRICANE IAN

Hurricane Ian hit Florida on Sept. 28 causing significant damage and flooding. NALC Disaster Response is preparing to help those impacted by the storm and is ready to send in trucks and volunteers as soon as it is safe to do so.

Go to [thenalc.org](http://thenalc.org) for disaster updates or to give online. Donations may be mailed to North American Lutheran Church; PO Box 860565; Minneapolis, MN 55486-0565. Please indicate "disaster response" on your check.

# NALC PASTOR PROVIDES 12 YEARS OF TEACHING AND OUTREACH IN THE CONGO

Pastor Stéphane M. Kalonji of St. Paul Lutheran Church in Rosenberg, Texas, recently returned from a mission trip to the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC). Pastor Kalonji has been involved in teaching the Bible and providing services as springboards for Gospel outreach in the DRC for 12 years.

As Pastor Kalonji was going on a mission trip to his native Democratic Republic of Congo in August, he remembered with amazement that the first trip took place back in 2010. Since that trip, a lot of things have changed in Congo. The nation has gone through changes in government leadership, some parts of the country have found more peace while unrest has only intensified in other parts, particularly in eastern Congo where rebel groups have not shown any interest in ceasing to fight.

Much more has changed but what has not changed is God's Word, consistently with what's written in Matthew 24:35, "Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away." It is the unchanging and unchangeable Word of God that Kalonji has been teaching for 12 years and is determined to keep



***Pastor Stéphane Kalonji preaching in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.***

teaching through seminars, preaching and ministry services.

While the DRC is known as a Christian nation, Pastor Kalonji, who grew up there, knows that the level of education people receive in God's Word is very little. Grateful for the education God has allowed him to receive in the United States, he goes back and blesses others with the blessing he himself has received from God.

***Continued on Page 25***



***Mothers holding their babies who were released after Pastor Kalonji's ministry paid their medical bills.***



In 2015, he was joined by Pastor David Nuottila of St. Jacob's Lutheran Church in Chapin, South Carolina. The pair has founded a nonprofit organization, Congo Mission International, through which they have been raising support and going to Congo to teach and serve.

In addition to teaching people God's Word through seminars, their mission work also includes feeding orphaned children, freeing babies who are detained in clinics after birth because parents are unable to pay their hospital bills which often range between \$35 and \$250, depending on how long a baby has been detained. The babies are also provided with clothes.

In addition, Pastor Kalonji and his mission partner provide reading eyeglasses and Bibles in local languages (French, Swahili, Lingala, Kongo and Tshiluba). They also preach at worship services and minister in other ways as the Holy Spirit provides opportunities.

During this year's mission trip, Pastor Kalonji taught about 1,000 people in Kinshasa and Kasai-Oriental. Forty-six babies detained in three clinics were freed and were taken home by their mothers. Two hundred Bibles in French and Tshiluba were given away. Approximately 600 children were fed a nutritious meal once a week for four weeks. More



**Participants in a seminar led by Pastor Kalonji.**

than 100 people received reading eyeglasses. And some financial support was provided for local farming projects.

All this was made possible by the generosity of many individuals, NALC congregations, the Carolinas Mission Region and the Texas Mission Region Great Commission Grants.

The Kasai-Oriental province of Congo is an area with a vibrant and fast-growing Lutheran community, yet they do not have a facility whatsoever. Thus, looking to the future, Pastors Kalonji and Nuottila are raising awareness and \$150,000 to build a multipurpose facility in that region, starting in 2023.

This project is expected to run from January 2023 through December 2025. The facility will provide people with a safe place for worship, a hall for various events, a space to run literacy programs and a room with a seating capacity of 50 people, where women will come to learn how to sew clothes. While this project is ambitious and costly, it is very much needed and will be a great investment in the expansion of God's kingdom.

For more information on this mission opportunity or to partner with Congo Mission International, please contact Pastor Kalonji at [kalonjist@aol.com](mailto:kalonjist@aol.com) or 252-876-5192), or Pastor Nuottila at [revdavidwn@gmail.com](mailto:revdavidwn@gmail.com) or 803-345-2309.



**Church leaders pose for a group photo.**

# CREATIVE AND FAITHFUL SOLUTIONS TO THE SHORTAGE OF PASTORS

It's no secret that there is a shortage of clergy in North America today. Roman Catholic parishes and church buildings have grown larger and larger because there aren't sufficient numbers of priests to serve. Lutherans in every denomination are dealing with a shortage of pastors, as our culture and human sinfulness discourage a life in service to God, the Lord Jesus and His Church.

In the North American Lutheran Church, there are 475 congregations. We have more than 700 pastors – 466 of them are actively serving and 246 are retired. Projections are that 277 pastors will retire within the next 10 years.

There are currently 87 congregations at some point in the call process, with 46 pastors who are open to a new call and actively involved in the call process.

We are working faithfully and diligently to provide pastors for all congregations. The NALC has set a goal of 300 new pastors within the next 10 years. We have also developed the Ordination Under Special Circumstances process to provide pastors for smaller, isolated and under-served congregations. Still, greater creativity and cooperation is needed on the local and mission



**Valhalla Evangelical Lutheran Church in Valhalla Centre, Alberta**



---

## MINISTRY MATTERS

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

---

district level to provide for the current needs of congregations.

Here are a few examples of how pastors, congregations and mission districts are responding:

A few years ago, the Canadian Mission District determined that vacant congregations were a mission opportunity for the mission district. At the encouragement of Pastor Mac de Waal, the dean at the time, it was decided that congregations without a pastor should have the Sacrament of the Altar at least once a month and that this was something that active pastors and congregations in the mission district could undertake. The mission district made room in its budget to cover mileage. Active clergy set up a rotation so that a vacant congregation, actively in the call process, could have Holy Communion once a month. Retired clergy were sometimes asked to provide pulpit supply for the sending congregation and to be available to serve vacant parishes, if possible, the other Sundays of the month (arranged as usual by the congregation). But this was seen primarily as *a ministry of congregations for congregations*.

Many congregations and their pastors embraced this opportunity as their shared responsibility and a chance to build relationships across the mission district. Pastors often hit the road with a member or two of their congregation along to support those congregations struggling to call a pastor.

**Continued on Page 27**



**Continued from Page 26**

As the Canadian Mission District is very large geographically, some pastors have traveled as many as six hours one way — as they say, uphill both ways through copious amounts of snow — to preside at the Lord’s Supper.

Vacant congregations are very appreciative, as pastors and congregations get to know one another better. They act like a mission district in partnership rather than a hierarchical, institutional organization. It fosters a climate of cooperation and care rather than competition, and it puts flesh on the work of benevolence and being the Body of Christ together.

Pastor Kevin Ree, area assistant to the bishop, states:

*I have heard comments from congregations new to the NALC like “Never before have we felt so supported by the larger church.” And sometimes our clergy are pleasantly surprised at just how vibrant and viable some of our more remote congregations are. I believe that over 10 congregations in the mission district have received such support between calls over the past three years. Supported congregations have often increased their benevolence, understanding it as a tangible way to pay it forward. If we are a church that is serious about being Congregationally Focused, perhaps other mission districts might consider such a practice. I think it has helped us to build relationships across the mission district and given new life to what it means to be the Church in mission together.*

Another creative approach to providing pastoral ministry for every congregation in an area is named “Resurrection Lutheran Cooperative Ministry” of Elderton, Pennsylvania. Pastor Joyce Dix-Weiers and Pastor Matthew Vatalare serve the parish.

There were several small congregations in the area — one or two with 12 to 20 folks. Pastor Vatalare served as an intern in the area. After graduation from seminary, he was called as a pastor as they developed this five-point ministry.

Each pastor serves multiple congregations each week, with lay worship leadership assisting as well.



**Christ-Rupp Lutheran Church  
Kittanning, Pennsylvania**

The Pennsylvania congregations involved are Salem Lutheran Church in Smicksburg; Christ Lutheran Church in Shelocta; Mt. Union Lutheran Church in Shelocta; Christ-Rupp Lutheran Church in Kittanning and St. Mark’s Lutheran Church in Adrian.

The congregations join together for fellowship, youth ministry, catechism instruction, Bible studies and other opportunities which strengthen the life and witness of each congregation as well as the outreach of the NALC in the area as a whole. Check out their website, [resurrectionlcm.org](http://resurrectionlcm.org).

In the beautiful Texas Hill Country (known for its German heritage), Holy Ghost Lutheran Church in Fredericksburg is a multi-staff congregation which has also come to see itself as working for cooperation and care in the Body of Christ, rather than competition. Holy Ghost congregation describes itself as blessed to be in partnership with two smaller congregations in their geographical area.

St. Paul Lutheran Church in Cave Creek, Texas, and St. Peter Lutheran in Doss, Texas, both were able to

**Continued on Page 28**

*Continued from Page 27*

depart from a former church body and join with the NALC due to the unique partnership with Holy Ghost. Holy Ghost shares pastoral staff with each congregation so that they may continue to be vital congregations in the proclamation of the Gospel and the ministry to the surrounding communities.

Pastor Clint Pluenneke serves in a two-thirds capacity at Holy Ghost working with the junior high confirmation program and high school youth, drawing teens from all over the community for a Wednesday youth worship and praise event, while serving in a one-third capacity at St. Paul leading worship, attending meetings and ministering in partnership with the members of St. Paul.

Pastor David Priem works in a similar capacity serving two-thirds time at Holy Ghost, serving as shepherding pastor while serving one-third time with St. Peter Lutheran leading worship three Sundays a month along with working in partnership with the members of St. Peter. When Pastor Priem is leading worship at Holy Ghost, Pastor Bobby Vitek or Pastor Steve Qualben, the other pastors at Holy Ghost, heads out to Doss to lead worship.

It is a unique partnership as sister congregations work in partnership for the greater good of the Church of Jesus Christ.

These are three real-life examples of the creativity, care and churchliness which is providing pastoral support for congregations within the North American Lutheran Church.



**St. Paul Lutheran Church in Cave Creek, Texas**



**St. Peter Lutheran in Doss, Texas**

Pastors and congregations are encouraged to be asking, “How can we help to serve our neighboring congregations which may not have a pastor?” and “How can we better understand ourselves as part of the wider Body of Christ and the NALC, rather than being focused on ourselves only?”

Pastors will certainly need to consider themselves as serving all congregations in the mission district, rather than the one congregation to which they are called.

Congregations will be well-served by a broader view that makes their pastor available not only to their congregation but also as a support and resource to other small and vacant congregations nearby.

Why will this serve our congregations well? In the not-too-distant future, it may be *your* congregation which is vacant, seeking a pastor, experiencing a longer vacancy and hoping and praying for support from neighboring congregations and pastors.

To discuss creative solutions, alignments and partnerships, pastors and congregational leaders are encouraged to contact your mission district dean, area assistant to the bishop or me.

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