

NALC RESPONDS AFTER HURRICANE IAN HITS FLORIDA

By Mary Bates
NALC Disaster Response

Hurricane Ian made landfall along Florida's Gulf Coast on Wednesday, Sept. 28, as a powerful Category 4 storm. The system reached a maximum sustained wind speed of 155 mph — two miles per hour short of Category 5 status — before arriving at Fort Myers.

Search and rescue teams were slowed by weather conditions. More than 130 fatalities have been reported.

The storm's counterclockwise spin pulled water out of Tampa Bay while inundating areas along Florida's southwestern coast with 12 to 16 feet of storm surge.

The storm traversed Florida from Fort Myers to Jacksonville (on the Atlantic coast) before moving back out to sea.

It then proceeded to make landfall on the South Carolina coastline as a Category 1 hurricane, causing minor flooding.

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After confirming that our congregations were not damaged, NALC Disaster Response delivered six truck loads of emergency relief supplies (with more on the way) to impacted families. The shipments included flood buckets, health kits, school kits, quilts, Bibles and baby supplies.

Shepherd of the Woods Lutheran Church in Jacksonville has served as a staging area for the deliveries.

The need is incredible. It's overwhelming for homeowners whose houses are badly damaged and flooded by this fierce storm. So many of the families do not have the resources to recover on their own and have lost hope. We want them to know that God loves them and hasn't forgotten them.

NALC volunteer teams will begin recovery efforts in November, and we are scheduling teams into 2023



at this time. To volunteer, contact Mary Bates, NALC Disaster Response coordinator, at 740-509-1132 or disasterresponse@thenalc.org.

Go to 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 "NALC Disaster Response" on the memo line of your check.

You can learn more about preparing NALC Disaster Response kits and other ways to prepare for disasters and to help those impacted by disasters at thenalc.org.



NALC PASTORS' CONFERENCE TO FOCUS ON RECLAIMING CHRISTIAN ANTHROPOLOGY

"Reclaiming Christian Anthropology: Gender Ideology and Our Pastoral Response" is the theme of the 2023 NALC Pastors' Conference Jan. 31-Feb. 2 at the Drury Plaza Hotel Riverwalk in San Antonio, Texas.

The keynote presenter for the conference will be Dr. John S. Grabowski, Ordinary Professor of Moral Theology and Ethics at The Catholic University of America in Washington, D.C.

Dr. Grabowski will present a clear understanding of Christian anthropology and then discuss the current attack on such anthropology from gender ideology advocates. Following the presentations there will be panel discussion with NALC theologians and group discussion.

Dr. Grabowski has been on the faculty of The Catholic University of America for 30 years. He has published widely in the areas of moral theology, marriage, sexuality and bioethics. He is the author of several books including *Unraveling Gender: The Battle Over Sexual Difference* and *Sex and Virtue: An Introduction to Sexual Ethics*.

Dr. Grabowski is currently serving as a theological advisor to the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) Committee on Laity, Marriage, Family, and Youth. He previously served as a theological advisor to the USCCB Subcommittee on Marriage and Family.

In 2015, he was appointed by Pope Francis to serve as an expert at the Synod of Bishops on the Family.



John S. Grabowski

He and his wife, Claire, were appointed to the Pontifical Council for the Family by Pope Benedict XVI in the fall of 2009.

"It has become clear that our pastors are seeking deep and meaningful theological content, while also providing on the ground, real-life application," conference organizers explained.

"Is there a timelier topic requiring in-depth biblical and theological reflection as well as reasoned, faithful pastoral response, than the current issues relating to biblical Christian anthropology? The current

confusion related to gender ideology has raised questions and challenges for parents, youth and children, as well as for pastors and congregations ministering to these persons."

Other conference highlights include a meeting of the NALC Ministerium, a Holy Communion service with the renewal of ordination vows and blessing of oil for use in congregations. There will be dedicated time for networking and encouragement with fellow pastors. Appointments with NALC leaders and Lutheran Benefits staff will also be available.

All NALC pastors are encouraged to participate in the 2023 Pastors' Conference. Congregations are asked to encourage their pastors to attend and to provide assistance with registration and travel expenses.

Registration fee is \$100. To register or for more information go to thenalc.org/pastors.

ALEXANDER PIERCE NAMED PROFESSOR FOR NALS

Dr. Alexander H. Pierce has been named Assistant Professor of Historical Theology for the North American Lutheran Seminary (NALS).

Dr. Pierce will also be added to the faculty of Trinity School for Ministry in Ambridge, Pennsylvania, home of the NALS Seminary Center.

Prior to joining the NALS, Dr. Pierce served as an assistant postdoctoral teaching professor in the department of theology at the University of Notre Dame near South Bend, Indiana.

He completed his doctorate in theology with a concentration in the history of Christianity at the University of Notre Dame in 2022. His doctoral dissertation is entitled, “Augustine on the Sacramental Economy of God’s Plan for Human Salvation.”

“I am honored and humbled by the opportunity to serve the hundreds of future pastors who must be raised up over the next decade, forming them in the Great Tradition of confessional and evangelical Lutheran faith,” Dr. Pierce said.

“The NALS is singularly focused on forming pastors and church leaders with an education both shaped by the Catholic tradition and bound by the Holy Scriptures,” he said.

Dr. Pierce will utilize his wide-ranging research and theological expertise — evident in his many scholarly articles, presentations, seminars and workshops — to educate seminarians across the NALS network.

Dr. Pierce received his Bachelor of Arts degree from Northwestern College (now called University of Northwestern) in St. Paul, Minnesota, with a concentration in biblical and theological studies in 2012. He received a Master of Arts degree in



Alexander Pierce

systematic theology and a Master of Divinity degree from Trinity Evangelical Divinity School in Deerfield, Illinois, in 2016.

Dr. Pierce studied under Dr. David Luy at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School and served as a teaching assistant for him. Dr. Luy was called as Associate Professor of Systematic Theology for the NALS and Trinity School for Ministry earlier this year.

Dr. Pierce and his family are members of St. Peter Lutheran Church, a Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod congregation in Mishawaka, Indiana.

He also serves as the president of the board of directors at Covenant Christian School in Mishawaka, where three of his children are enrolled in a Spanish language immersion program.

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“Dr. Pierce will help elevate the seminary’s commitment to delivering the knowledge and tools necessary for tomorrow’s pastors and church leaders to be the stewards of classic, orthodox, biblical theology in preparation for Word and Sacrament ministry in the NALC,” said the Rev. Dr. Eric M. Riesen, president of the NALS.

The North American Lutheran Seminary is an interdependent network of five seminaries across North America working together to form leaders for the North American Lutheran Church.

The NALS serves seminarians from across North America through a network of campuses, including Trinity School for Ministry; Beeson Divinity School

in Birmingham, Alabama; Concordia Lutheran Seminary in Edmonton, Alberta; Fuller Theological Seminary in Pasadena, California, and Houston, Texas; and Kairos University-Sioux Falls Seminary in Sioux Falls, South Dakota.

“Dr. Pierce was hired to serve the seminary at a point when the NALC is experiencing significant growth,” Dr. Riesen said.

The NALS is a seminary network forming pastors and church leaders for the North American Lutheran Church 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.

PASTORAL DEVELOPMENT DAYS

The NALC will be offering Pastoral Development Days January 27-30 at the Drury Plaza Hotel San Antonio Riverwalk in San Antonio, Texas.

Pastoral Development Days, which will immediately precede the NALC Pastors’ Conference, are open to any NALC pastor wishing to improve and develop pastoral skills, understanding and excellence.

The event will be especially helpful for newly ordained pastors, those ordained only a few years and those mid-career who wish to sharpen skills and abilities.

Topics to be addressed include faithfulness and excellence in ministry; pastoral and personal self-reflection and assessment (including goal setting and accountability); the pastor as leader and member of a team; best practices for building a functional church leadership team; a deep dive into the DNA of the NALC.

The sessions on Sunday will be directed toward excellence in preaching, with preaching practicums and small group discussion and evaluation. The Pastoral Development Days conclude on Monday

morning with presentations on “best practices,” in ministry.

As a part of the NALC’s 2020 Vision initiative, registration and meals will be covered by the NALC, but spots are limited to 20 participants. Participants are responsible for their own hotel costs.

For questions or more information, contact Pastor David Wendel, assistant to the bishop for ministry and ecumenism, dwendel@thenalc.org.

To register or for more information go to thenalc.org/pastors.

SPOUSE GATHERING

All pastors’ spouses are invited to participate in a pastors’ spouse gathering at 6:30 p.m. on Monday, January 30, prior to the opening of the annual NALC Pastors’ Conference. There is no cost to participate.

To register or for more information go to thenalc.org/pastors.

WHO ARE WE? AND WHY ARE WE?

The occasion remembered this month by Christians throughout the world is the beginning of what we know as the Protestant Reformation 505 years ago. On Oct. 31, 1517, Martin Luther nailed his *95 Theses* to the door of the Castle Church in Wittenberg, Germany. This simple action, common in his day and time, began a movement that would ultimately change the landscape of the Christian Church.

Two basic questions come to mind as we remember what happened during that time in history and as we reflect on the calling and identity we have in Jesus. “Who are we?” and “Why are we?” What does God want for His Church? Why do we exist? And what is it we should be doing together, if our lives are to give honor to the God we serve?

If we were to take a step back and think about the Reformation, there are many ways we could describe the work of Luther and the other reformers. Some would see them as champions of freedom — not unlike Abraham Lincoln or Martin Luther King Jr. or Nelson Mandela. In Luther’s case, it was freedom from the controlling authority of the 16th-century Church.

But the roots and the cause of the Reformation go deeper. They involve the kind of freedom which comes to an individual when he or she asks the question, as Luther did, “How can I, a sinner, stand in the presence of a holy and righteous God?” and then when he or she hears the clear declaration that “Christ has died for you and that your sins are forgiven because of Him.” To Luther and to Jesus, and for us, this is the truth that sets you free.

And so, we come to the heart of the Reformation. And so, we come to some of the foundational teachings of our faith: how we are justified by faith in Jesus, how the Scriptures are our sole authority for faith and life, and how we believe in the priesthood of all believers, with Jesus as our one and only High Priest.

“Who are we?” and “Why are we?” As a church, we are a reformed church — a church that has been



FROM THE BISHOP

REV. DR. DAN SELBO
BISHOP

reformed. We are also a reforming church. In fact, the entire Christian Church fails to be the Church unless it is constantly re-forming itself as the Body of Christ. As time goes on and the world changes, the Church needs to change with it. If it doesn’t, it loses touch and it dies.

At the same time, there are certain things in the Church that never change. That’s what the Reformation was all about. The Word of God stands forever. The truth of Jesus as the Son of God will always be true. And the Church, the Body of Christ in this world, will always be the vehicle through which that truth is carried into the world.

As you think about the reforming work God is doing in the world — the reforming work He is doing in us — it all comes down to a few basic truths: 1. Jesus is Lord. He always has been, and He always will be. 2. He’s called us to follow Him. He’s called us to give Him first priority in our lives. 3. When that happens, the more closely we follow and the more intentionally we live out our faith, the more effective and re-formed our lives become.

“Who are we?” and “Why are we?” Guided by the leadership of Bishop John Bradosky during his tenure, the NALC kept our Lord’s calling “to be and to make disciples” as a primary focus for us as a denomination. That same emphasis, I trust, will continue throughout our history. It’s the primary calling we’ve been given: to learn what it means to be followers of Jesus, and to live out what we’ve learned by sharing our faith with others.

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In my devotional time, I've been working my way through the Old Testament prophets — all pointing to the saving plan and purpose God had in mind for the world. In my reading, I caught myself thinking about the mission of the Church and about how that all played out in the life of Jesus.

What you find in the Gospels — in those stories of Jesus' life — is a picture of how Jesus understood His mission. When Jesus came to this earth, that's what He was doing. He was on a mission. And what you find are not the things that so often come to mind when we think about the mission of the Church.

If you said to Jesus, "Jesus, tell me about your mission trip to earth," He probably wouldn't tell you anything about church buildings or classes or seminars. He wouldn't say anything about how many people they had on a Sunday morning or how close they came to balancing their budgets. He wouldn't even talk about denominations. There was no such thing. What He would probably do is to tell you about some of the people.

"Let me tell you about this tax collector named Matthew. It was unbelievable! His life was going nowhere. I called him to be one of my followers. You should have seen the look on the other tax collectors faces when he dropped what he was doing and followed!"

Or "Let me tell you about this woman caught in adultery. Everyone there was ready to stone her. And, yet, when I challenged them to throw the first stone if their lives were without sin, they all dropped their stones and left."

Or "You should have seen what happened to this man who was lame, unable to walk; his friends made a hole in the roof and dropped him down so he could be healed. It was amazing when he picked up his mat and walked home."

As I was reading, I was reminded that the mission of the Church should probably parallel the mission of Jesus. If what He did in His life, while He was here, was built around His encounters with people, then the things we do in our lives, while we're here,

should also be designed to give the people we meet the opportunity to come face-to-face with Him.

"Who are we?" and "Why are we?" Transformed and renewed; reshaped and re-formed, more and more each day, into the image and likeness of Christ. I've often thought we make this "following Jesus" thing too hard. The commission to go into the world and make disciples is not as big and as daunting as it might first appear.

Now, it's big, no question, because it's a calling to impact the world. And it's daunting, no doubt, because there's no way on our own it'll ever happen. But it's not as hard as we sometimes make it, because all it is is responding and being faithful to the calling we have in Christ.

Follow Jesus and your life will change. Do what He tells you and reformation will happen. And not just in you, but in those around you. And not just in those around you, but throughout the world. One person at a time. One transformed life at a time. One person giving testimony to another of what God has done for them in Christ.

It can happen both ways in life. Christians can be influenced by the world if they're not careful. The world can be influenced by us if we have our priorities straight. Transformation happens when we allow the priorities of our lives to be set by God. Renewal and reformation take place when we allow His words to us to become the words we share with others.

That's exactly what Jesus said to His followers. "If you hold to my teaching, you are truly my disciples, and you will know the truth and the truth will set you free" (John 8:31-32). That's the calling we have been given in the Church. That's the identity we claim as followers of Jesus. And that's what needs to happen in us if our lives are to make a difference for Christ.

Who are we as Lutheran Christians? Why are we as believers in the NALC? Don't over think it. It's not as hard as we sometimes make it. One person at a time, living out their faith, sharing what they've come to know, and trusting that the One who came into this world and who has called us to follow, is still working to re-form and to save His world.

MINISTRY UPDATE FROM PASTOR VALERY HRYHORYK IN BELARUS

We here in Belarus thank God for you, for your faithfulness to the Lord, and ongoing support of our ministry during this extremely difficult time. The Lord is acting in this world through His people. Below is an update on the ministry of Belarus Lutheran Missionary Fellowship (BLMF).

Political and economic situation

As the war in Ukraine continues, Belarus is facing deep economic and political crises. Industry is experiencing a large decline because of the western sanctions. Some aid is coming from Russia due to the fact that Alexander Lukashenko, president of Belarus, and Vladimir Putin, president of Russia, are friends.

Politically, Belarus has become a puppet country of Russia. Russia is using the territory of Belarus in its interest against Ukraine. The people of Belarus do not support the war. After the protests of 2020 Lukashenko started repressions against the protestors. The KGB is using videos and photos from the protests to repress those who did not leave the country.

Officially, around 200,000 Belarus citizens had to flee from the country to Poland and other neighboring countries. As of today, there are more than 1,300 political prisoners in Belarus, and this number continues to grow.



The United States government has stated that “the United States stands with the people of Belarus as they pursue a more democratic, sovereign and prosperous future.”

In spite of the geopolitical changes in the world, we, as Christians, are called to continue with the fulfillment of the Great Commission of our Lord. The politicians are not that strong compared to God’s will and plans. Who from the politicians can make the sun rise and go down? None. But our Lord created this world just by a word. He spoke and things happened. We here in our missionary society know that everything is in the hands of God. We still believe that God is in control and everything is happening according to His Holy Will. It looks like that God wants to teach humanity another lesson. Love still remains His strongest power that keeps this creation together.

We here at Belarus Lutheran Missionary Fellowship are full of confidence and boldness to continue with all branches of our ministries as long as the Lord permits us to do so. Below is the update on the ministry from this summer.



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We are grateful to God for you, for your ongoing support at this very difficult time of change. We understand that it is so easy for us, as believers, to become weak in our faith and to become politically biased due to secular propaganda. It is a test for all Christians now. Christ was never political. He said that He came to this world to show people the way to heaven and was pointing to the kingdom of God. There will be no nationalities in heaven. All His children shall be in one Spirit, glorifying God. Let us not forget about this.

We are grateful to our Lord for our summer Bible camp this year! It is a historic Bible camp for us in that we started our ministry for the 8-year-old children — a new generation of people in our country!

I am sure that they will remember everything that was taught about their Father in heaven at the camp, as I remember mine when I was this age. To God be the glory!

Please watch a short video from our Bible camp at: [youtube.com/watch?v=xIQ-6vse1LI](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xIQ-6vse1LI).

Every year since 2000, Belarus Lutheran Missionary Fellowship has invited children from all over Belarus to come to BLMF Summer Bible Camp. For the last 10 years the camp has taken place in Dolsha — in a very picturesque part of Vitebsk Region about 25 km away from the main regional city of Vitebsk. Dolsha is situated on a beautiful lake.



Each year 30-50 new children and their parents are introduced to the Gospel of Jesus Christ through various Bible camp activities. The children live in tents. There is one solid building standing on the territory of the camp with two rooms. One room is used as a kitchen and the other as a bedroom for the families with children. The building itself is very old and was built after World War II. Several years ago, we were able to change the roofing system and put siding on the three outside walls. We also purchased a water cooler, a new cooker and a refrigerator.

This year we are praying to the Lord to allow us to remodel the inside of the building and to purchase the needed furniture. We are also hoping to build an additional hallway room.

We are grateful to those of you who already contributed to this building project in Dolsha. We managed to do a lot of improvement, but still funds are needed to purchase furniture and to rebuild the back wall of the building itself.

Ministry to invalids and handicapped children

We helped organize a summer camp for the Regional Handicapped and Invalid's Society and played a Christian concert for them. We made more friends and had a lot of spiritual talks. To God be the glory! Please pray for the good seed to give good growth and harvest in due time.

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Youth ministry

Along with spiritual talks we try to be creative and organize all kinds of activities for youth. A pancake master class was one of them. We taught the children how to cook traditional pancakes. It was fun as some children had never cooked in their lives. So we were privileged to open up a new page for them! Please pray with us for more creative ideas on how to introduce young people to the Gospel.

Telling young children and youth about a right relationship with God is very important in our situation. We live in an Orthodox country, where there is no stress on a personal relationship with Jesus. In the majority of cases it is all about visiting a church, buying a candle or an icon, feeling God and looking at the art work of the church buildings.

Music ministry

Golden Gate Christian music group was actively taking part in the city concerts all summer. One of the biggest took place in the central park of Vitebsk. We are also praying about taking a tour to the nearby cities. Preaching via music is a great tool for the kingdom of God. More concerts are planned in the coming months. Please thank the Lord with us for the participants of the group: Vitaly (bass guitar), Dima (drums) and Andrey (guitar).

In the Golden Gate recording studio, we have recorded a new song called "Holy Temple". It is about a spiritual search of a person's soul. We are now thinking of making a video version of it. Please give thanks to God with us for the music ministry and for its influence on the lives of people.



My birthday

Birthdays and other holidays are very good opportunities to gather friends and to witness about God to them in a very intimate and friendly manner. This year it was a good opportunity for me to do that. Last year, on my jubilee birthday (55), I was at my father's funeral. So this year we decided to invite all our friends. I am very blessed with good friends and thank the Lord for that.

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Friendship is truly one of the greatest gifts in life. In our friends, we find trusted companions who know us and love us for who we are, no matter what. It takes a lot of work to keep relationships with friends happy and healthy, but our friends are the people who get us through rough times — the people who very often come to us with compassion. I thank the Lord for you, my friends!

Please subscribe to the BLMF page in Facebook. Contact me at blmfministry@gmail.com for any additional information.

Dear friends, this update comes to you from me with no easy heart. The fact that our president is contributing to the possible apocalyptic events makes us sad and encourage us to engage more in prayer for peace. Please pray with us for peace in the world. The Lord hears us. Everything is in His loving hands.

Again, we are grateful without measure for your ongoing support at this time of change. We need

you now the most. We give thanks to God for you. May the Lord bless you as you bless others.

Pastor Valery Hryhoryk is an NALC global worker serving Belarus Lutheran Missionary Fellowship. You can learn more about how to partner with him in mission at thenalc.org/partners/valery-hryhoryk.

MISSION GRANTS

The North American Lutheran Church's Great Commission Fund offers grant money each year to congregations and ministries engaged in the work of the Great Commission. These grants are intended to provide seed money for new mission starts, assistance to existing congregations in renewal efforts, emergency or transition funds and in the support of global projects, NALC missionaries and global workers.

If you would like to receive an information packet on how to apply for a 2023 grant, please contact Pastor David Keener at dkeener@thenalc.org

NALC ADVENT DEVOTIONAL

And He Shall Reign, an Advent devotional booklet for 2022, will be available in early November at thenalc.org/advent.

The devotions — written by members of the NALC staff — are based upon the daily lectionary provided in the NALC “Devoted To Prayer” daily prayer and reading guide, which is an adapted version of the daily lectionary in the *Lutheran Book of Worship*.

PDF copies of the devotional booklet will be available for download from the NALC website. Congregations are encouraged to print copies for distribution to their members.



For details on how to access the devotional electronically or to receive it as a daily email or text message, please visit thenalc.org/advent.

CAROLINAS MISSION REGION OFFERS SOLID ROCK DAY CAMP

By Melanie Corn

NALC Youth and Family Specialist

Eight college-age counselors, five host churches, thousands of melty beads, hundreds of sheets of construction paper, five Bible lessons on Moses and God's great rescue of His people, 110 elementary-aged campers, many songs, skits and games, many, many volunteers and One Lord in whom we put our faith.

Solid Rock Day Camp, a ministry of the Carolinas Mission Region of the NALC, hosted its second season of day camps this past summer. Our goal is to help our young people build their faith on Christ — the Solid Rock — not only the faith of our participants, but the faith of our college-aged young people who work as counselors.

Day camp is a five-day program geared toward children or middle-schoolers, where faithful Christian, college-aged counselors go to a host church to lead camp activities and build relationships among kids.

Activities include worship and music, games, age-appropriate Bible study, crafts, special activities and



field trips. Counselors are hired and trained by the Carolinas Day Camp team, which consists of pastors and leaders with many years of counseling and camping ministry experience.

I am incredibly grateful for the work of this team: Seminarian Cody Carpenter, Pastor Jason Dampier, Pastor Chris Metze and Pastor Mark Metze.

We believe that Solid Rock Day Camp meets the needs of our kids, parents, host churches and the Church.

Our kids desperately need Christian community, and they love camp because they get to make new friends, play fun games and hear Bible stories. And they get to do it with a really cool, fun and faithful counselor.

Parents love day camp because they receive one week of inexpensive, quality, faith-based childcare during the summer.

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Solid Rock Day Camp also meets the needs of host churches who may find themselves without enough volunteers to lead traditional summer programming for children.

We are very thankful to our host churches this past summer: St. John's Lutheran Church in Kittanning, Pennsylvania; New Jerusalem Lutheran Church in Hickory, North Carolina; Antioch Lutheran Church in Dallas, North Carolina; Annapolis Evangelical Lutheran Church in Annapolis, Maryland; St. Peter Lutheran Church in Chapin, South Carolina; and Holy Trinity Lutheran Church in Little Mountain, South Carolina.

Many of these host churches partnered with other area congregations to bring a bigger group of children together for this day camp experience. This benefits everyone because no one congregation has to bear the full burden of expenses or gaining enough volunteers. We have also found that day camp becomes a shared experience for your children and, therefore, becomes the catalyst for your children's ministry throughout the school year.

The most important purpose of Solid Rock Day Camp is to give our college-aged students a chance to do real ministry. Counselors love this job, because they get to spend their summer doing ministry with their peers who become family, they get to love like Jesus loved, do silly activities with kids and have lots of fun.

Our counselors have said "I grew much closer to God because of this experience." "I saw God in the powerful impact we made on kids." And "It is a really fun job to be able to teach kids about God and also help in providing positive memories for the kids."

Our Solid Rock Day Camp team trains counselors in a one-week orientation, teaching them to allow the Counselor — The Holy Spirit — to work through them. We continue to work closely with staff throughout the summer by providing weekly staff worship, daily calls or texts to assist staff as needed and much prayer and encouragement.



Our counselors develop ministry and leadership skills through this experience, and we believe this is filling a need for the Church: raising up faithful leaders for today and for the future.

We can't know yet whether any of our counselors will become ordained ministers, lay ministers or youth directors, but we do know that all of them have continued to stay active in their home churches and have taken on leadership responsibilities.

Part of my job with the NALC is to create a how-to manual for implementing a day camp program in your area.

In addition to my experience as a Christian education and youth director at St. Peter Lutheran Church in Chapin, South Carolina, for the last 10 years, I worked five summers as a camp counselor and senior staff member, and I have served as our church's coordinator for our previous day camp program.

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FAITH FORMATION FESTIVAL PLANNED FOR CAROLINAS MISSION REGION

The Carolinas Mission Region is hosting a Faith Formation Festival Jan. 6-7 at Holy Trinity Lutheran Church in Gastonia, North Carolina. The event is described as “everything you want to know about youth and family ministry.”

The event is for pastors, Christian education directors, youth leaders, Sunday school teachers and anyone who works with children and youth in the Carolinas area.

The event will be held Friday, January 6, 6:30 p.m. to 9:30 p.m. and Saturday, January 7, 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. Coffee and snacks are included on Friday. Lunch, coffee and snacks are provided on Saturday.

Registration fee is \$50 for both days or \$20 for Friday only or \$35 for Saturday only. To register or for more information go to thenalc.org/faith-formation-festival-2023.

Guest speakers include the Rev. Dr. Amy Little, NALC general secretary; Melanie Corn, Christian education director at St. Peter Lutheran Church in Chapin, South Carolina, and Youth and Family Ministry specialist for the NALC; the Rev. Melinda Jones, pastor of Advent Evangelical Lutheran Church in North Charleston, South Carolina; the Rev. Dr. Steven King, managing editor for Sola Publishing; the Rev. Dawn Rister, pastor of Salem Lutheran Church in Salisbury, North Carolina; the Rev. Teresa Peters, associate pastor of Joy Lutheran Church in Winnipeg, Manitoba, and director of Youth and Family Ministries for the NALC.

Topics to be discussed include:

- + Tackling Biblical Illiteracy (an intergenerational approach)
- + Youth and Family Best Practices



- + Identify the Spiritual Gifts of our Youth
- + The Use of Storytelling with Children
- + Raising God’s Children to be Disciples in a Broken World
- + Youth and Family Ministry in the NALC

If you are not in the Carolinas area but would like to have a Faith Formation Festival in your part of North America, contact Pastor Teresa Peters, director of Youth and Family Ministry for the NALC, at tpeters@thenalc.org.

DAY CAMP

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I would love to partner with pastors and church leaders in other geographical areas of the NALC to help you set up a day camp program. I truly believe that day camp is vital to the ministry we are doing with and for our young people. Please contact me if you are interested in learning more.

Melanie Corn is the youth and family specialist for the NALC. You may contact her at families@thenalc.org.

MARTIN LUTHER - CONSERVATIVE?

Let me begin by saying that this essay is not what you might think. In this hyper-political environment, most minds hearing “conservative” may immediately go to one corner or the other of the boxing ring! If I might suggest our minds go elsewhere, it would be to direct you to one of the Core Values of the North American Lutheran Church — “Traditionally Grounded.”

We are often asked about this Core Value. What does it mean? Does it mean traditional worship? Does it mean traditional teaching?

In one sense, being Traditionally Grounded means we are conservative. Not politically, but biblically, theologically and confessionally.

The word *conservative* derives from Latin “to preserve,” from *con* (together) and *servare* (to keep). It means to protect from harm or destruction. Many might be surprised to learn that the Lutheran reforming movement begun in the 1500s was, in fact, a *conservative* movement. How can that be?

Martin Luther was a faithful monk, priest and theologian within the one holy, catholic and apostolic Church. From the beginning, his intention was never to break with the Church, destroy the Church or form a new Church.

Luther’s desire was to call the Church back to the Gospel — the Good News that we are saved by grace through faith in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ — not by works, whether donations, prayers, acts of devotion or godly vocations.

Luther repeatedly called for the Church to return to the Gospel. He believed, at the beginning, that if the pope or bishops or a council of the Church would only realize and acknowledge how the Gospel had been lost or corrupted, they would willingly bring about the reform so desperately needed in the Church.

Luther’s message was not a new, creative or innovative teaching, but an attempt to protect,



MINISTRY MATTERS

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preserve and conserve the true, pure Gospel of Jesus Christ, for the sake of the salvation of sinners.

There were those in what is called the Radical Reformation, who called for a complete rejection of much in the medieval Church, including the destruction of statues and images, including stained-glass windows.

While Luther desired to cleanse the liturgy of the mass of anything which would suggest worshipers were “adding to” the once-for-all sacrifice of Jesus on the cross, he kept most of the liturgical forms, devotions and practices in use by the faithful.

Once Luther’s proposal for return to the Gospel was rejected and he was excommunicated, it became certain other reforms might be beneficial, such as liturgy in the vernacular, marriage of priests and Communion in both kinds (bread and wine — body and blood). However, Luther allowed whatever might point the faithful to Christ and rejected whatever might be regarded or worshiped in the place of God, who alone is worthy of worship.

Luther clarifies this in his essay titled sarcastically, “Against the Heavenly Prophets” which was written against those who claimed to have prophetic knowledge with regard to images and idolatry.

Luther wrote: “I will first discuss images according to the Law of Moses, and then according to the gospel. And I say at the outset that according to the Law of Moses no other images are forbidden than an image of God which one worships. A crucifix, on the other

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hand, or any other holy image is not forbidden. Heigh now! you breakers of images, I defy you to prove the opposite!"

And why is this important in October and November, when we are thinking about the Reformation and its implications for the NALC today?

First, it's helpful for us to consider this with regard to our value of being Traditionally Grounded.

We are part of the Church catholic, which means that we agree with that Christian teaching which has been held "always, everywhere and by all," as stated by St. Vincent of Lerins.

We have not created new core values, nor new, innovative teaching founded on new spiritual insights or wisdom. We hold to the truth and authority of God's Word, as the Word of God.

We are protecting and defending biblical anthropology — that God has created us in His image, male and female He created us, with marriage between one man and one woman as God's holy estate.

We are protecting and defending all human life as created and sustained by God, from conception to natural death. Above all else, we stand firm on the Gospel — the saving Good News that we are saved by God's grace through faith in Jesus — apart from works — apart from anything we believe might make us acceptable or worthy in God's sight.

Second, it is helpful for us to always be measured in what we consider to be essential for us as Lutherans.

Many criticize other Lutherans for practices and actions with which they may not be familiar, as if my own personal experience of Lutheranism is "true Lutheranism." As with Luther, many make the sign of the cross, give thanks for saints, and Lutheran congregations may have crucifixes in their churches. At the same time, some Lutheran congregations do not always make use of vestments, use the lectionary every Sunday or observe lesser festivals.

All NALC congregations agree on the truth and authority of God's Word, the centrality of the Gospel, the ecumenical creeds and the Lutheran Confessions. This is what it means that we are Traditionally Grounded.

Finally, it is helpful for us to be reminded of the "Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification" signed in 1999 by the Roman Catholic Church and representatives of the Lutheran World Federation. You can read the statement and learn more at lutheranworld.org/jddj.

The statement affirms:

We confess together that sinners are justified by faith in the saving action of God in Christ. By the action of the Holy Spirit in baptism, they are granted the gift of salvation, which lays the basis for the whole Christian life. They place their trust in God's gracious promise by justifying faith, which includes hope in God and love for him. Such a faith is active in love and thus the Christian cannot and should not remain without works. But whatever in the justified precedes or follows the free gift of faith is neither the basis of justification nor merits it.

Its preamble states:

The present Joint Declaration has this intention: namely, to show that on the basis of their dialogue the subscribing Lutheran churches and the Roman Catholic Church are now able to articulate a common understanding of our justification by God's grace through faith in Christ. It does not cover all that either church teaches about justification; it does encompass a consensus on basic truths of the doctrine of justification and shows that the remaining differences in its explication are no longer the occasion for doctrinal condemnations.

Why are we Lutherans today? As at the beginning, the Lutheran reforming movement seeks to conserve — to preserve and protect the Gospel!

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