



CHRISTMAS MESSAGE FROM BISHOP DAN SELBO

Greetings in the name of our God — Father, Son and Holy Spirit — as we look forward to the celebration of our Lord's birth at Christmas and His glorious and victorious return when the Father will call us all home to be with Him forever!

Thank you for your ministry and for your partnership in the work of the Gospel. It is my deepest and most sincere desire and prayer that this Christmas season will be one in which we offer a strong and encouraging word of hope to a world that is in desperate need of what only our Lord Jesus can give.

As you know, there are more personal messages sent during the Christmas season than any other time of the year. More than 2 billion Christmas cards will be sent in North America alone. There is something about Christmas that encourages people to stay in touch with those they love. There's also a built-in opportunity for us, during the Christmas season, to share the message of what God has done and accomplished for us in Jesus.

The Bible says, "In many and various ways God spoke of old to our fathers by the prophets; but in these last days He has spoken to us by a Son" (Hebrews 1:1-2). The message of Christmas is a word spoken directly to us from



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*Nativity and Annunciation to the Shepherds
by Bernardino Luini (c. 1480-1532)*

God. It is also a word that offers and promises stability and hope, when so much of the world is hopeless and unstable.

It is mind boggling how fast our world is changing. Many of our college students are studying for jobs that do not yet exist. Not only that, but they are doing so in a world where there is more information at our fingertips than available less than a generation prior.

When I was growing up, it was nothing like it is today. When we needed to know something, we pulled out our encyclopedias and looked it up. Now, you just Google it and there it is. One click on the screen and the information is there.

What's fascinating is that with this advance in technology we also have access to more relationships with more people than was ever possible. It used to be that your friends were those who lived next door or down the street. You went to the same school or the same church and those were your friends. Today, you can have friends on the other side of the world. You can have relationships with people who live in places you've never been and with whom you've never met.

Do you know what else is fascinating, almost frightening? In this world where there's more information available and more relationships accessible than ever before, there's also a growing number of people — individuals in this connected and "friend-filled" society — who are feeling less-connected and more de-friended than they have ever been.

Recent studies have shown that for many people there's more anxiety over losing a phone than there is over losing a friend. For many, their best friend has become their phone. And their phones are the main and the primary connection they have with their best friends.

It's not surprising that some of the same studies have also shown that there's a longing in our society, like never before, for connections and



FROM THE BISHOP

REV. DR. DAN SELBO
BISHOP

communities that actually care for each other. In this increasingly more electronically-connected world, there's a longing for true connections.

On that first Christmas, God was careful and intentional in making the connection He did when He sent His Son into our world. And He was personal in doing it because He was doing it in the person of Jesus Christ. He was connecting with us, so we could connect with Him. He was becoming a person with us, so we could begin to see Him and know Him in a personal way.

As challenging as it is to reach the hearts of people in our society for Jesus, let us not forget that the relationship we have with God, in Christ, is the kind of relationship people are longing to find. God came into our world to make an incarnate and in-person connection with us. It was also the reason, and still is, that God has called us together in the Church. Let us not forget or neglect the importance of gathering together as the Body of Christ.

As you proclaim the name of Jesus this Christmas, and as you bear witness to the relationship God has established with us in His Son, do so with boldness and confidence that the Holy Spirit is working through your proclamation to connect with and draw people to Christ. Do it also with a sincere desire and prayer that God will open new doors for new relationships to be established with those for whom our Lord Jesus was born.

Thank you for your faithful witness. Thank you for the work you do and the partnership we share. It continues to be a joy and an honor to serve as your bishop. Know that my prayers are with each of you.

Have a blessed and a hope-filled Christmas, as we celebrate the incarnate relationship that is eternally ours with God in Jesus!

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.

"It has become clear that our pastors are seeking deep and meaningful theological content, while also



John S. Grabowski

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.

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

NALC LEADERS VISIT ETHIOPIA, TANZANIA AND DUBAI

I therefore, a prisoner for the Lord, beg you to lead a life worthy of the calling to which you have been called, with all lowliness and meekness, with patience, forbearing one another in love, eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to the one hope that belongs to your call, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of us all, who is above all and through all and in all. — Ephesians 4:1-6 RSV

At times, it is helpful to be reminded of our ecumenical and inter-Lutheran intentions and commitments, in response to the Lord's prayer that "all may be one ... that the world may believe" (John 17:21).

The constitution of the North American Lutheran Church in Article 13 on "Church-to-Church Relationships" states: "the NALC shall participate in inter-Lutheran, ecumenical, and inter-religious relationships as a part of its ministry and mission."

"An Initial Statement on the Ecumenical and Inter-Lutheran Commitment of The North American Lutheran Church," approved by the 2010 NALC Convocation, affirms:

"As a new church body the North American Lutheran Church (NALC) acknowledges with appreciation the various inter-Lutheran and ecumenical efforts to manifest Christian unity. We pledge ourselves to continue this journey toward unity among all Christians, convinced that the modern ecumenical movement is a gift of the Spirit of God to the churches as a means of expressing their oneness in Christ."

It should be noted that from the beginning, these commitments were always to be "in accordance with our commitment to the Scriptures and the Lutheran Confessions," the initial statement says.



MINISTRY MATTERS

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

The statement includes as a priority to "cooperate in ministry and mission with other Lutheran churches in the world that share our Scriptural and confessional commitments, for example, African Lutheran churches in Ethiopia, Tanzania and Uganda."

This led to a Full Communion Partnership Agreement with the Ethiopian Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus (EECMY), signed in November of 2012, and a Memorandum of Understanding with the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Tanzania (ELCT), signed in August of 2013.

Since that time, church leaders from EECMY and ELCT have attended NALC convocations and have participated as presenters, preachers and officiants. NALC leaders have also visited Ethiopia and Tanzania for consultations and events.

Leaders from the EECMY, ELCT and NALC have also been instrumental in the formation of the Global Confessional and Missional Lutheran Forum, hosted by the NALC in 2015, 2016 and 2017 and hosted by the EECMY in Bishoftu, Ethiopia in 2018.

Another visit to Ethiopia and Tanzania planned soon after the election of the Rev. Dr. Dan Selbo as bishop, was delayed due to COVID-19. As the pandemic began to make an impact globally, these important relationships stalled.

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As church life and travel began to return to normal, discussions started regarding the possibility of a landmark journey of NALC leaders to restart, re-engage and renew these critical international relationships.

A delegation from the North American Lutheran Church traveled to Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, and Arusha, Tanzania, for consultations with leaders of EECMY and ELCT in November.

The journey concluded with a visit to Dubai to visit Pastor Martha Shanka, an NALC global worker, to review her work of teaching, preaching and leading worship in this predominantly Muslim country.

The NALC international contingent included Bishop Dan and Mary Selbo; the Rev. Dr. Amy Little, general secretary; the Rev. Dr. Gemechis Buba, assistant to the bishop for international mission; the Rev. Dr. Eric Riesen, president of the North American Lutheran Seminary; the Rev. Carol Fryer, missions specialist; and the Rev. Dr. David Wendel, assistant to the bishop for ministry and ecumenism.

The delegation met with EECMY President Yonas Yigezu and church officials on Thursday, Nov. 10, followed by a tour of Addis Ababa's dynamic and exciting educational and cultural changes, impacting life and ministry within Ethiopia. The visit to Ethiopia was highlighted by participation in an EECMY-NALC Reformation Conference on Saturday, Nov. 12.

The group was hosted by ELCT Presiding Bishop Fredrick Shoo; General Secretary Robert Kutundu and ELCT officials on Monday, Nov. 14, at the church offices in Arusha, Tanzania. The official church-to-church consultation was followed by a visit to the Tumaini-Makumira University and theological school in Arusha, hosted by the Rev. Professor Dr. Joseph Parsalaw, vice-chancellor, who serves under the ELCT presiding bishop as chancellor.

Reviewing the past, establishing and engaging in new relationships, the consultations focused with



NALC leaders pose with EECMY leaders at EECMY-NALC Reformation Conference, from left, the Rev. Dr. Lalissa D. Gemechis, director of mission and theology; the Rev. Dr. David Wendel; the Rev. Dr. Eric Riesen; the Rev. Dr. Yonas Yigezu, EECMY president; Bishop Dan Selbo, the Rev. Dr. Gemechis Buba; the Rev. Dr. Amy Little; Wondmagegn Udessa, director of children and youth ministry; and Yamikani Chikoti, director of Kanyenyeva Orphan Care Ministry in Malawi.

new energy on strategic and significant movement forward in these inter-Lutheran consultations. As always, there are church-to-church interactions which will be continued, with considerable energy committed to shared theological educational opportunities for our church bodies.

However, all were in agreement in conversations with both EECMY and ELCT that local connections and relationships between NALC congregations in North America and those in Ethiopia and Tanzania must receive utmost attention, as formal ecumenical consultations mean little if they do not impact the lives of parishioners, pastors and congregations on the ground in real life.

This has been the intention of the consultations from the start — that more than church-to-church relationships, our deeply shared desire is for our congregations, mission districts and members to meet, learn with, share with Lutheran brothers and sisters around the world, but especially in Ethiopia and Tanzania. These meetings will spur us forward in this regard. Please watch for more information to come regarding how congregations and mission districts might engage with local ministries and mission work in East Africa.



The NALC Executive Council continues its work to establish a permanent office near the Dallas-Fort Worth International Airport (DFW). The NALC currently has rented office space in a shared workspace facility called Venture X in Grapevine, Texas, north of the airport. The offices are located across the street from the large Grapevine Mills shopping mall and near a wide variety of hotels. While the office search continues, the NALC staff are busy working in their first home in the DFW area.



Pastor Susan Fox, office administrator, poses in one of three small offices rented by the NALC. The bishop and general secretary have similar offices. Additional offices can be added at this location as other staff begin working at the DFW office.



Posing outside of the NALC office are, from left, Pastor Susan Fox, office administrator; Pastor Marta Shanka, an NALC global worker in Dubai; Pastor Amy Little, general secretary; Mary Selbo; and Bishop Dan Selbo.

NALC OFFICE



The NALC office at Venture X in Grapevine, Texas, includes a shared reception desk and available spaces for conversation and meetings.

CAROL FRYER JOINS MISSIONS STAFF

The Rev. Carol Fryer has joined the NALC missions staff as a missions specialist. This is a full-time position.

“As a young child I dreamed of going to Africa. In 2002, I was privileged to visit the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Tanzania (ELCT), particularly the Northwestern Diocese. I was involved in a companion synod relationship with the ELCT until 2019, including making several trips to visit the ELCT,” she said.

“I believe that the Holy Spirit has called me to this new and exciting ministry, having prepared me for it in many ways throughout my pastoral career. I am part of the international administrative staff, working with the Rev. Dr. Gemechis Buba and others on international and domestic missions for the NALC. I give thanks to God for giving me this opportunity to serve His church in this way.” she said.

Pastor Fryer attended the Lutheran Theological Seminary in Gettysburg, Pennsylvania, where she met her husband the Rev. Greg Fryer. She graduated with a Masters of Divinity in 1985.

The Fryers served a two-point parish in South Central Pennsylvania and later in Gettysburg. They moved to New York City in 1991 when Pastor Greg was called to serve at Immanuel Lutheran Church in Manhattan’s Upper East Side.

In 1994, Pastor Carol was called to serve Saint Peter’s Lutheran Church in Midtown Manhattan.

She received a Masters of Sacred Theology in Spiritual Direction in 2001 and has served as a spiritual director for more than 20 years, working with individuals and groups.

In 2007, she became the director of spiritual care at Wartburg Adult Care Community and pastor of United Lutheran Church of Mount Vernon, N.Y. She left there in 2019 to join her husband as a part-time pastor of Immanuel. She continued there until joining the NALC staff.

You can reach Pastor Fryer at cfryer@thenalc.org.



Carol Fryer

GEMECHIS BUBA TO SERVE NALC FROM ETHIOPIA

The Rev. Dr. Gemechis Buba, assistant to the bishop for international mission, will be serving the North American Lutheran Church from Ethiopia beginning in January.

This new location will enable him to strengthen the NALC’s close relationship with the Ethiopian Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus and the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Tanzania – two of the largest Lutheran Churches in the world.

Dr. Gemechis will continue serving in his full-time capacity on the NALC staff, working to strengthen the partnerships we currently have, to expand the number of global workers we support and, as a result, to extend our global reach. A portion of his time will be committed to strengthening his online ministry and pastoral training programs that raise up leaders to proclaim the Gospel into countries throughout Africa and the Middle East.

Dr. Gemechis is a native of Ethiopia and has significant connections with Christians and leaders there. He had been working from his home in Georgia. He and his family will be moving to Ethiopia after Christmas. The new location is on a six-month trial basis.

WHERE IN THE WORLD IS GEMECHIS?

For 12 years the Rev. Dr. Gemechis Buba has led the North American Lutheran Church as assistant to the bishop for international missions. We have seen him center stage at mission festivals and mission convocations, encouraging us to share the Good News of Jesus in our congregations, neighborhoods and the world.

We all love to hear him preach and teach about the call on our lives to go and make disciples of all nations. His words are inspiring, energizing and bring us hope for a greater mission in the North American Lutheran Church. Even though we see him up in front preaching his heart out, praying with unmatched fervor and sharing stories from his experiences, he may still be a little bit of a mystery to most of us.

What is he doing?

Where is he?

This article is just a small insight into the powerful and Spirit-led ministry of our friend and fellow worker in God's kingdom.



FROM THE GENERAL SECRETARY

REV. DR. AMY LITTLE
GENERAL SECRETARY

In his native Ethiopia, everyone calls him Dr. Gemechis. No matter where we went with him this past November, there was always someone who knew him and reached out to thank him for the word he shares through Leadstar TV. Leadstar refers to the star of Bethlehem that led people to the Christ child.

Just last month, Bishop Dan Selbo, Mary Selbo, Pastor Eric Riesen, Pastor David Wendel, December 16, 2022, Pastor Carol Fryer and I had the joyous experience to travel with Dr. Gemechis to his native land (and then on to Tanzania and Dubai) to see all the things he is working on there and to make some greater connections with other Lutherans serving the kingdom of God.



NALC leaders visit the Ethiopian Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus (EECMY), from left, the Rev. Dr. Lalissa D. Gemechis, EECMY director of mission and theology; the Rev. Dr. Gemechis Buba; Mary Selbo, Bishop Dan Selbo; the Rev. Dr. Yonas Yigezu, EECMY president; the Rev. Carol Fryer; the Rev. Dr. David Wendel; and the Rev. Dr. Amy Little.

It was fun to be around him because the humble and winsome man that you see at NALC events is the same one who works tirelessly around the world. He has many things that occupy his thoughts each day, and at times during the journey we would witness him thinking about some aspect of his ministry and what needed tending to. There were phone calls from church leaders, students, global workers, and even the prime minister himself!

But to walk with him for even one day shows how his efforts are directed toward education and the advancement of those who haven't

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had many opportunities in their lives. When Dr. Gemechis talks about what he is doing he says, “It’s giving them a ticket.” By that he means, a ticket out of poverty, a ticket to a better life, a ticket to share Christ with the world.

Dr. Gemechis worked tirelessly to ensure that the leaders of the NALC could make significant connections and form deeper relationships with our global partners, the Ethiopian Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus and the Evangelical Lutheran Church Tanzania.

We were greatly blessed to meet with the leaders of the two largest Lutheran church bodies in the world and to learn what they are doing in terms of evangelism, youth ministry, women’s ministry, Bible translation, seminary education and so much more!



Dr. Gemechis Buba with children in Ethiopia



Dr. Gemechis speaking in Ethiopia

These opportunities afford us a clearer path toward working together as a global church, and Dr. Gemechis is instrumental in leading the way in these partnerships. The main goal of our work together as churches is a mutual sharing of gifts. This unity strengthens the Church universal.

As we traveled from one country to the next, starting in Dr. Gemechis’ homeland of Ethiopia, we were inspired by the work he has been doing there for the past 12 years: a seminary, a business college, a radio and television studio, a primary school and plans to create a retreat center for pastors — all for the purpose of making disciples and bringing more and more people to the reality of Christ’s love for them.

As each day wound down to evening, Dr. Gemechis would either call or receive a call from his family.

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We got to overhear the delightful conversations he had with his children. They would tell him about their day or what was coming the next day in school, and he would pray for them, for tests and for homework, for events at school and meals at home. They would have short discussions about a piece of Scripture or he would encourage them to do their best at something and through that tiny lens we got to observe this amazing father who practices what he preaches in public with his young family at home.



Dr. Gemechis Buba with graduates of his LeadStar International Ministries pastoral training program.

Dr. Gemechis may be a bit of a mystery to us all, but, in reality, he is working diligently for the kingdom, making incredible connections, setting up creative ways to fund the mission and raise up workers for the harvest. He is a praying man, and his joy and laughter in his work is palpable and infectious.

But there were days when he was tired. We all get tired! Even with all of his energy and excitement, we saw him on days when he probably would have rather stayed in bed a bit longer. As a group around the dinner table we discussed the very real attacks of the enemy who would surely prefer to see Dr. Gemechis burn out. That would shut down a whole lot of kingdom work. It's the same for all of us.

You may not always know where he is, but Dr. Gemechis is always somewhere tilling the ground for the seeds of the Gospel, praying for those in need, raising up leaders for the harvest, and diligently caring for all that the Lord has entrusted to him, with gratefulness and with humility. He would love for you to connect with him, to travel with him, as he loves to have companions on the journey! If you do, you will see what we saw — a Gospel impact in the world!

So, as I end this brief snapshot about this humble servant of Christ, I would ask you to pray for him

and his family — that God would give him the strength to continue sowing the seeds of the Gospel wherever the Lord sends him, and that his family would continue to thrive and flourish in faith and in obedience to our Lord's call.

Lord God, heavenly King of the universe, hear our prayers for all pastors, teachers, and disciples of Christ who lead people into kingdom work. Give them strength and courage in the face of unexpected and unknown obstacles. Grant them the insight and wisdom that comes only from You so that they will follow Your lead and not devise their own plans. We pray especially for Your servant, Dr. Gemechis Buba, and his family, that you would give him the strength and continued vision to share the love of Christ around the world. We pray for our pastor, that he/she would be filled with Your light and love and would resist all temptations toward power, influence, or control, but instead would be obedient to Your calling. Make our lives conformed to the cross of Christ, that in all we do, our actions and attitudes would exhibit the fruits of the Holy Spirit. In Jesus' holy name we pray. Amen.

Pastor Amy Little is the NALC general secretary. You may contact her at alittle@thenalc.org.

NALC EXECUTIVE COUNCIL UPDATE

The Executive Council of the North American Lutheran Church met Oct. 21-22 in Irving, Texas.

In a joint meeting with the Board of Regents of the North American Lutheran Seminary, Bishop Selbo led a re-installation of new members of the Board of Regents and the Executive Council elected at the 2022 NALC Mission Convocation.

The Executive Council approved a request from the Board of Regents to ratify the appointment of Roger Weyersberg to a two-year term on the Board of Regents.

The council approved a “thank you gift” to Trinity School for Ministry for the use of their facility for the 2022 NALC Mission Convocation.

The Executive Committee gave its blessing to Pastor Gemechis Buba to serve as deployed NALC staff stationed in Ethiopia Jan. 1 to June 30. This is for a six-month trial basis.

The Executive Council approved changes to the NALC Employee Handbook as recommended by the Governance Committee.

Pastor Mark Werner was elected to serve as recording secretary for the Executive Council.

The Executive Council met online on Nov. 29. The council approved distribution of funds to our mission partners as adopted by the convocation. The council also approved a proposal from Brotherhood Mutual for insurance coverage.

NALC DEANS GATHER IN TEXAS

Deans from the NALC’s regional mission districts met Nov. 2-3 in Irving, Texas.

The deans heard from Bishop Dan Selbo and NALC staff members on their areas of responsibility.

The deans discussed the current and impending shortage of pastors and the NALC’s vision that all congregations will have pastoral support. The deans discussed the “ordination under special circumstances” process and best ways to serve congregations without pastors. They also discussed the need to encourage individuals to consider ordained ministry.

The 2020 Vision and its Today, Tomorrow & Forever initiative were discussed including how deans can assist congregations in their efforts.



Mission district deans from throughout the NALC met Nov. 2-3 in Irving, Texas.

Deans met with their area assistant to the bishop and brought back concerns and suggestions from those meetings regarding ministry in various parts of North America.

“WE HAVE NO CHILDREN OR YOUTH OR FAMILY MINISTRY”

Since beginning to reach out to churches throughout the NALC, I often hear, “we have no young people in our congregation, so we can’t have Youth and Family Ministry.”

In Genesis, God did not create churches with dozens of children and loads of teens with a great youth leader. God created one man and one woman and said, “Be fruitful and multiply,” thus a multi-generational family.

Every young person needs an extended family of Christian adults — adults who can be a part of the cloud of witnesses that cheers them on. Only church and family can provide Christian nurture from birth to old age — and even death. Only church and family can affirm and encourage young people in their growth toward Christian maturity. Church is the only “organization” where all generations participate together in our society.

So, how can we do this when we have no young people in our congregations?

Here are some ideas for how a congregation can have Youth and Family Ministry when it has no children or youth sitting in the pews:

+ Care packages with activities for Advent, Christmas, Lent or Easter for grandchildren of church members. During COVID-19 many churches did this for their Sunday school kids. If you would like ideas of what to pack and how to make them contact me.

+ Host a parents’ night or afternoon out. Plan a fun filled evening or afternoon where parents can get free quality care for their children. Advertise at schools, community clubs and to grandparents in your congregation. This is often a hit in December, so parents can shop without their kids. Don’t forget to do proper background checks on each helper.



YOUTH AND FAMILY

REV. TERESA PETERS
DIRECTOR OF YOUTH
AND FAMILY MINISTRY

+ Community event. Have a barbecue, rent a bouncer, have a dunk tank. Have giveaways and free food.

+ Tutoring program. Make a connection with your local school and offer tutoring after school one day a week at your church. Also have healthy snacks, puzzles and games available. This works especially well if you have retired schoolteachers in your congregation. Again, ensure that proper background checks are done on each helper.

+ Offer your church to local music teachers. Music teachers are often looking for places for their students to have recitals. A place where parents and grandparents can see them perform. This is especially true for teachers who offer home lessons. Then offer refreshments for those attending.

+ Volunteer at the local school or community center. Become part of the community, letting them know what your congregation has to offer.

Obviously, doing these things does not mean that suddenly you will have a church full of young families with children. But what it does mean is that when a person is looking for a church, they will already have a connection. It also means that you as a congregation are living out your call to be disciples and the commission to go forth and make disciples.

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If you have any other great ideas like these, please share them.

More Youth and Family Ministry updates:

NALC youth serving in love

Once again, the North American Lutheran Church is encouraging youth throughout the United States and Canada to participate in a service event sometime during the month of February 2022.

Youth can lead a service project or participate in a service ministry your congregation already is planning. We know that young people see themselves as part of the church when they are actively involved.

After your project, please email a photo and description of your project to me.

We will feature as many as we can of your serving projects in an upcoming NALC newsletter.

If you want more details or want ideas, please reach out.

New opportunity for confirmation classes

Is your church currently without a pastor?
Do you have youth that are of confirmation age?

Confirmation is all about growing — in understanding and in faith — by God's grace. It's a time when individuals add their "yes" to the promises made by their parents, caregivers and sponsors at their Baptism.

We would not want young people to miss this opportunity just because a congregation is currently without a pastor.

For this reason, the Rev. Dr. Mark Braaten is offering confirmation classes, on Zoom, beginning in January. Dr. Braaten is the Southern Area assistant to the bishop for the NALC. For more information contact him at southernaab@thenalc.org.

+ Join "NALC Youth and Family Workers" on Facebook.

+ Connect on Zoom! A group for Sunday school teachers, youth workers, pastors and anyone who works with youth and families meets on the second Thursday of the month at 6 p.m. ET and the fourth Thursday of the month at 9 a.m. ET. The Zoom link is <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/6250934259>.

Email me at tpeters@thenalc.org.

Pastor Teresa Peters is the director of Youth and Family Ministry for the NALC. You may contact her at tpeters@thenalc.org.

NALC APPROVED AS MILITARY ENDORSER BY U.S. ARMED FORCES

Most people don't know that in order to be a chaplain in the United States and Canadian Armed Services, the chaplain must be formally endorsed by a religious organization.

For the United States, the religious organization must be accepted and listed with the Armed Forces Chaplain Board (AFCB).

Since the beginning of the NALC, we have used other partner Lutheran church bodies, and we are very thankful for their support of NALC chaplains.

The NALC is now recognized as a religious organization endorser by the AFCB. Pastor Jess Abbott is the NALC's military endorsing agent.

If you are, or know of, an NALC pastor or seminarian considering service as a chaplain in the active component, National Guard or Reserve, please contact Pastor Abbott at militaryendorser@thenalc.org.

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



everything you want to know about youth and family ministry

- + 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.

AGING AFFIRMATION

The country is aging at a rapid rate, and so is the Church.

Instead of looking at an aging congregation through the lense of decline and death, can we see it as an opportunity – an opportunity for discipleship growth, evangelism and renewal?

If your congregation is aging, and you would like to examine how mature adult ministry can re-energize your parish, please contact Pastor Brad Hales, NALC director of renewal and aging ministries at bhales@thenalc.org or 540-270-1026.

NEXUS INSTITUTE SEEKS TO RAISE UP A NEW GENERATION OF CHURCH LEADERS

The Lutheran church needs a new generation of pastors and leaders who break the mold and lead communities of transformation.

The NEXUS Institute is a week-long theology program on Grand View University's campus in Des Moines, Iowa, for high school students. It is a life-changing experience of theological learning, Christian community, and vocational exploration that exists to raise up church leaders of the future.

NALC NEXUS Institute for 2023 is July 16-22. This is a special week for NALC members.

All applicants must be current high school students who want to grow in their faith and understanding. Applicants who are interested in or open to working in ministry someday are given preference.

Applicants should want to follow God's leading in their lives and have an interest in better understanding what a difference following Jesus makes in everyday life.

Cost is a \$100 registration fee, plus any costs for travel. Meals, lodging and activities are covered through sponsors.

GRAND VIEW UNIVERSITY



where God's call meets your life

For more information go to grandview.edu/NEXUS or thenalc.org/gallery/nexus-2023 or contact Kate Faas, NEXUS director, at kfaas@grandview.edu.

YEAR-END GIVING

Remember that year-end gifts must be postmarked by Dec. 31 to be included in 2022 giving totals.

Gifts to the NALC and its designated funds may be given online at thenalc.org/giving or mailed to North American Lutheran Church; PO Box 860565; Minneapolis, MN 55486-0565.

STUDY WITH THE NALS

IT'S ALL ABOUT THE RELATIONSHIP

WITH THE REV. BRAD HALES

LEARN MORE AND TO REGISTER, VISIT [THENALS.ORG/THE-RELATIONSHIP](https://thenals.org/the-relationship)

BEGINNING JANUARY 5TH

The fuel of the local church is relationships. Whether it's the relationship with Jesus, the relationship with other believers, or the relationship with the community, we need to continually build and strengthen these connections, in order to more effectively share Christ with others. Join us for a four-part Zoom course through the month of January about the church's relationships, taught by the Rev. Brad Hales, Director of Renewal Ministries for the North American Lutheran Church (NALC).

The logo for the North American Lutheran Seminary features a circular emblem with a cross and a heart. To the right of the emblem, the text "NORTH AMERICAN LUTHERAN SEMINARY" is written in a serif font.

NALC LIFE MINISTRIES UPDATE

The NALC Life Ministries team is once again preparing for the March for Life in Washington, D.C., in January, but our plan is a little different.

Instead of holding a life conference, NALC Life Ministries has decided to team up with Lutherans for Life (LFL) and participate in their events at the March for Life.

The LFL youth conference, Y4Life, will be held at the Hilton Crystal City Hotel Jan. 19-21. It has over 400 kids already registered. We encourage all NALC youth to participate in this conference. For more information or to register go to y4life.org.

The NALC Life Ministries team is also planning its presence during the 2023 Lutheran Week in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma.

On Friday, Jan. 20, we will be once again participate in the March for Life under the NALC banner. Please join us at the corner of 12th and Madison Street NW at noon as we march to the U.S. Capitol.

Before the March for Life there is a prayer service at DAR Constitution Hall (18th and D St.) starting at 8:30 a.m. NALC members are invited to attend this service, and our clergy are invited to participate and to vest (stoles are white).

If you have any problems at the march, please contact Pastor Dennis Di Mauro at 703-568-3346. Pastor Di Mauro can also host you in his home if you would like to stay overnight in the Washington, D.C., area.



Some NALC participants at the 2022 March for Life in front of the U.S. Supreme Court building.

NALS SPECIAL EVENT

The North American Lutheran Seminary (NALs) is planning a special event for Wednesday, May 3, at Zion Lutheran Church in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. The event will be a formal "affirmation of call" for the Rev. Dr. Eric M. Riesen as president of the NALS and installation of Dr. David Luy and Dr. Alex Pierce as NALS professors.

Dr. Riesen has been the seminary president since 2020 but was never formally installed due to COVID-19. Dr. Luy and Dr. Pierce joined the seminary faculty in 2022.

More details will be announced at thenals.org.

LET'S KEEP IN TOUCH

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NORTH AMERICAN
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Please copy and share this newsletter widely.