



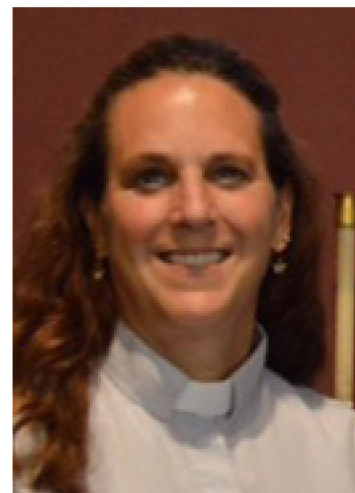
PASTOR AMY LITTLE CALLED AS NALC GENERAL SECRETARY

The Rev. Dr. Amy C. Little, pastor of Trinity Lutheran Church in Monroeville, Ohio, has accepted a call to serve as general secretary of the North American Lutheran Church.

NALC Bishop Dan Selbo appointed Pastor Little to serve as general secretary after a search that included 17 nominees and an interview panel consisting of members from the NALC Executive Council. Pastor Little's call was then confirmed by the NALC Executive Council on July 7.

The general secretary functions as the chief operating officer of the NALC, managing its day-to-day administrative functions. Pastor Little follows the Rev. Mark Chavez, who served as general secretary for nearly 10 years. Pastor Chavez resigned in April to serve as pastor of Reformation Lutheran Church in Lancaster, Pennsylvania.

"I am deeply humbled and honored to be chosen to serve in the call of



Amy Little

Continued on Page 2

LUTHERAN WEEK IS AUG. 2-6 IN CORPUS CHRISTI, TEXAS

Lutherans from throughout North America will gather Aug. 2-6 in Corpus Christi, Texas, for Lutheran Week 2021 around the theme, "God the Father Creates."

Lutheran Week is the annual gathering of the North American Lutheran Church.

The 2021 NALC Mission Convocation, the annual meeting of the NALC, is the central focus of Lutheran Week. The convocation is preceded by the Braaten-



**GOD THE FATHER
CREATES**

Lutheran Week 2021

Benne Lectures in Theology on Aug. 3-4 and the Women of the NALC Annual Gathering on Aug. 3.

Continued on Page 3

AMY LITTLE TO BE INSTALLED AS NALC GENERAL SECRETARY AT CONVOCAATION

Continued from Page 1

general secretary of the NALC. It has been a joy to be a pastor in the NALC, and now to follow in the amazing footsteps of Pastor Mark Chavez is something only the Holy Spirit could orchestrate,” Pastor Little said.

“I am delighted to serve the church in this capacity and know I have much to learn. I am grateful to Bishop Selbo for trusting me to be a part of his staff, and I pray God will help and guide me in this new call,” she said.

Pastor Little, who lives in Norwalk, Ohio, has served as pastor of Trinity Lutheran Church for nearly two decades. She has also served as the submissions editor for Sola Publishing since 2012.

Within the NALC, Pastor Little has served on various committees, including the NALC Candidacy Committee (2014–2020) and the NALC Disaster Response Team (2011–2013). She also has served as a Pastoral Care and Transition Team member for the Ohio Mission Region since 2015.

“The first 11 years of the NALC have been incredible, and I give thanks to those who helped to form and shape it in its infancy and younger years. We owe a great debt to those faithful leaders — Bishop Paull Spring, Bishop John Bradosky, Pastor Mark Chavez — and the remaining staff and leaders of the NALC. They gave us a great foundation,” Pastor Little said.

“Now we are moving into the teen years of our blessed church, and we have the joyful task of working through the growing pains and providing greater support to the increasing number of congregations, pastors and ministries. I am excited to get started and look forward to serving Christ and his people in this position,” she said.

“With the appointment and call of Pastor Amy Little to serve as general secretary of the North American

Lutheran Church, my prayers and those of many others have been answered,” Bishop Selbo said.

“Pastor Amy not only brings the gifts and skills needed to fulfill the role, but also brings a deep and abiding love for the Lord Jesus and His Church that will be a blessing to our church body. I am thankful that God has raised up such a faithful follower of Jesus to serve in this important position, and I am truly excited about where God will lead us in the years ahead,” Bishop Selbo said.

“Pastor Amy has a heart for serving the Gospel and for sharing the Good News of Jesus with all who are willing to hear. She has strong organizational and administrative gifts, pays attention to detail and carries out her work with integrity and grace. I look forward to working with her, and I trust and believe that God will use her gifts to strengthen our shared witness and to further enable us to respond to the calling and commission we have in our Lord Jesus,” he said.

Pastor Little is a graduate of Ohio University in Athens, Ohio, where she studied zoology and art. She received her Master of Divinity degree from Trinity Lutheran Seminary in Columbus, Ohio, and her Doctor of Ministry degree from Lutheran Theological Seminary at Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. Her doctoral thesis was entitled, “Called, Gathered, Enlightened and Sanctified: Using Bowen Theory and Luther’s Catechisms to Resolve Conflict and Revitalize Congregations.”

Pastor Little has been married to her husband, Jeff, for 27 years. They have two children: Noah (24) and Anna (19). Noah married their daughter-in-law, Alyssa, in 2020.

Pastor Little will be installed as general secretary at the upcoming 2021 NALC Mission Convocation during Lutheran Week in Corpus Christi, Texas, and will assume office on Sept. 1.

LUTHERAN WEEK FOCUSES ON 2020 VISION

Continued from Page 1

Most of the events of Lutheran Week will take place at the American Bank Center, a convention center several blocks away from the Omni Corpus Christi Hotel, the official hotel for the week.

The NALC's 2020 *Vision* will be the focus of much of the business of the convocation. Each of the 10 points of the 2020 *Vision* will receive a time of focus during the convocation.

The convocation will also consider two significant recommendations flowing from the 2020 *Vision*. Delegates will consider a proposal to create four geographic regions for the NALC and to call four part-time assistants to the bishop to serve those regions. They will also consider affirming the Executive Council's decision to establish a central NALC office in the Dallas-Fort Worth, Texas, area.

The convocation begins with a Holy Communion service at 1:30 p.m. on Wednesday (Aug. 4). The Rev. Dr. Dan Selbo, NALC bishop, will preach for the service and the Rev. Nila Cogan will preside.

Pastor Cogan is serving as chaplain for Lutheran Week. She is the pastor of St. Thomas Evangelical Lutheran Church in Hooversville, Pennsylvania, and Dunmyer Lutheran Church in Johnstown, Pennsylvania.

The convocation will elect one lay person and one pastor to the NALC Executive Council and two members of the Court of Adjudication.

Financial reports will be presented and budgets for 2022 will be approved.



Corpus Christi, Texas, will host Lutheran Week Aug. 2-6.

An amendment to the NALC Constitution regarding mission districts and mission regions will be considered. The current constitution describes "regional subdivisions," but does not name them. Mission districts has been the name used for regional subdivisions since the beginning of the NALC, but the constitution was never amended. The proposed amendment also notes that some mission districts are working together as mission regions.

The Rev. Dr. Steven Paulson, a noted Lutheran theologian, and Melissa Ohden, an abortion survivor, will deliver keynote addresses to the convocation on Thursday and Friday, respectively.

Mission districts will meet on Thursday night.

A worship service will conclude the convocation at 3:30 p.m. Friday. The Rev. Dr. Gemechis Buba, assistant to the bishop for missions, will be preaching for the service. Bishop Selbo will preside at the service including the installation of the Rev. Dr. Amy Little as NALC general secretary and those elected by the convocation and the commissioning of disciple guides.

Continued on Page 9

MELISSA OHDEN AND STEVEN PAULSON ARE THE KEYNOTE SPEAKERS FOR CONVOCAATION

Melissa Ohden and the Rev. Dr. Steven Paulson are the keynote speakers for the 2021 NALC Mission Convocation Aug. 4-6 in Corpus Christi, Texas.

Dr. Paulson, professor of Lutheran Theology at Sioux Falls Seminary in Sioux Falls, South Dakota, is the featured speaker on Thursday morning. He is the chair of Lutheran Theology for the Luther House of Study at Sioux Falls Seminary. Sioux Falls Seminary is one of the houses of study of the North American Lutheran Seminary.

Dr. Paulson has earned doctorate and master's degrees from the Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago. He has degrees from Luther Seminary in St. Paul, Minnesota, and St. Olaf College in Northfield, Minnesota.

Prior to coming to Sioux Falls, Dr. Paulson taught at Concordia College in Moorhead, Minnesota, and Luther Seminary.

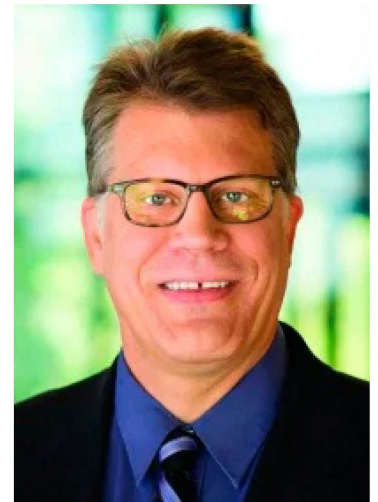
Dr. Paulson is the author of many books and articles. His books include *Luther for Armchair Theologians* and *Lutheran Theology*. His most recent books are three volumes in a series called *Luther's Outlaw God*.

Dr. Paulson is featured on the weekly podcast "Outlaw God" from 1517.org. He is also one of the featured theologians on the "Scripture First" podcast from Luther House of Study which is a review of the lectionary Gospel reading for each Sunday.

Melissa Ohden is the keynote speaker on Friday morning. She is the founder of the Abortion Survivor Network, the only healing and advocacy organization for abortion survivors worldwide, and the Education and Policy Center, which impacts policy issues relative to abortion and abortion survivors.



Melissa Ohden



Steven Paulson

Melissa is the survivor of a failed saline infusion abortion, but like every survivor, she is so much more than a survivor. She is a social worker and the author of *You Carried Me: A Daughter's Memoir* and *You Are More: A Survivor's Guide to Healing*.

Melissa is a frequent contributor to pro-life and conservative news outlets and a regular guest on radio and television programs around the world.

Although Melissa's heart is for providing help and hope to all affected by abortion, she also strives to humanize unborn children through activism. She has testified before congressional committees numerous times.

Fulfilling the purpose that she believes God set out for her when He saved her from the certain death of the abortion attempt, Melissa is truly a voice for the voiceless.

You can learn more about Melissa at her website, melissaohden.com, and about the Abortion Survivors Network at abortionsurvivors.org.

MISSION CONVOCATION WILL ELECT MEMBERS OF EXECUTIVE COUNCIL AND COURT OF ADJUDICATION

The 2021 NALC Mission Convocation will elect one lay person and one pastor to the NALC Executive Council and two members of the Court of Adjudication – all to four-year terms.

Joel Williams of Erwin, South Dakota, has been nominated for the lay position on Executive Council.



Jess Abbott



Mark Werner



Joel Williams

The Rev. Dr. Jess Abbott of Loveland, Ohio, and the Rev. Mark Werner of Pittsgrove, New Jersey, have been nominated for the ordained minister position on Executive Council.

Nominated for the Court of Adjudication are the Rev. Miguel Acosta of Lorain, Ohio; the Rev. Dr. Jeffray Greene of Brooks, Georgia; Lyle Hollander of Boyden, Iowa; and Matthew Lind of Bainbridge Island, Washington.

Biographical information on the nominees is available online at thenalc.org/nominations.

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

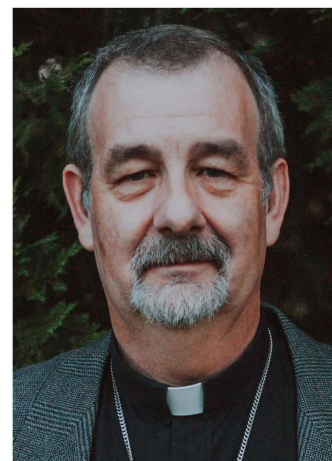
The Court of Adjudication decides questions regarding the interpretation of NALC governing documents and hears accusations that someone has violated those documents and appeals from disciplinary decisions. Both pastors and lay members may be elected to the Court of Adjudication.

Nominations for Executive Council and Court of Adjudication closed 45 days prior to the convocation.

The convocation will also confirm the nomination of the NALC Nominating Committee for 2022.



Miguel Acosta



Jeffray Greene



Lyle Hollander



Matthew Lind

FOCUSING ON OUR VISION AT MISSION CONVOCAION

As we prepare for our upcoming Lutheran Week, I cannot help but reflect on what has happened since the last time we met together as a church body. Last year, as you know, we were unable to meet in-person and held our NALC Mission Convocation online. When we come together in Corpus Christi, Texas, it will have been two full years since we were together in Indianapolis.

Since that time, we have all experienced challenges we never saw coming. Much of our worship has been online. Our fellowship gatherings have been few and far between. Our visitation ministry has been limited. Our personal interaction has been sporadic, at best. Many of the things we have done for so long and so well have needed to be placed on hold. In various ways, we have all been forced to adjust our approach to ministry, trusting that God will continue to work, even as our work has adjusted to meet the challenges.

Now that we are beginning to see the light at the end of the pandemic tunnel, it is important for us to remember that the calling we share in Jesus has not changed, nor has the faithfulness of the One we follow. As ones who have been called by the Light and who follow the One who is this world's Light, we need to make sure that the light we shine in and through our ministries, and on and among our communities, shines on Him.

As I have now begun to resume some of my travels throughout our church body, I am encouraged by the stories I hear of how God has been faithful throughout the pandemic. In spite of the challenges, lives have been touched and changed. The saving and life-giving message of the Gospel continues to be proclaimed and heard.

I am also encouraged by the excitement I sense as our pastors and congregations are beginning to resume some of the ministries that have been placed



FROM THE BISHOP

REV. DR. DAN SELBO
BISHOP

on hold. There truly is a sense that we have an opportunity — perhaps no greater than before, but now more clearly seen — to have an impact in a world that is in desperate need of what only Jesus can give.

At our Mission Convocation in August, much of our time will be centered in the *2020 Vision* we have adopted as a denomination. The reports from our staff will call attention to the work being done in each of the 10 areas of focus. In spite of the many challenges, much progress has been made. I would encourage you, as you hear and read their reports, to be praying about how and where and in what ways you and your congregation and mission district might become supportive and involved.

I would also encourage you, as you pray about your own involvement and support, to view the 10 vision components not as separate pieces to a disjointed and unrelated strategic plan, but as integral parts to a larger and more all-encompassing approach to our shared ministry.

The 10 components are each important in themselves. They each address one or more of the varying needs and opportunities we face. At the same time, they are not intended to be separate and unrelated pieces to a visionary puzzle.

Rather, they are placed together as they are as a unified strategy, to ensure that our shared work in

Continued on Page 7

STEWARDSHIP WORKSHOP DURING LUTHERAN WEEK

Join us for RESET, a workshop hosted by the NALC Living and Giving Stewardship Team during Lutheran Week.

Two identical workshops will be offered — at 8:30 a.m. on Tuesday, Aug. 3, and at 7:30 p.m. on Wednesday, Aug. 4. There is no additional charge to attend the workshops.

Is it possible to change the culture of giving in your congregation? Yes!

Though first, one has to understand one's own relationship to money and giving. RESET is a highly interactive study that helps congregations reset and sharpen their vision of giving. It will test participants' assumptions and misconceptions. Through exploring your family of origin and how it shapes your current attitudes about giving, you will learn how to craft your own story about your relationship with money and giving.

This seminar also resets our biblical understandings about Jesus, money and possessions, and assists congregations in resetting their priorities and faith practices — to shift giving and generosity from being only a transactional activity to one that is truly transformational. Transformational giving is not focused on the amount or size of the gift, but on the joy and life-changing effect it has on the giver.

What has been your experience of giving in congregations — joyful and generous or conflictual and challenging? Is there a spoken or unspoken concern that there is never enough? You will be asked to explore those concerns and write a spiritual biography about giving in your life and a vision for giving in your congregation — a vision based upon how Jesus has richly blessed your life.

Participants will also learn how to build a legacy of giving — the importance of creating a testament to

your faith with one's money and possessions that reaches far beyond your lifetime.

Join us in the conversation, as together we work to build a culture of generosity in our families and our faith communities!

For more information on Lutheran Week or to register for the workshop go to lutheranweek.com.

BISHOP'S MESSAGE

Continued from Page 6

the NALC remains true to the faith we profess and consistent with the Core Values we hold. The call we share in the Church and the Lord we serve deserve nothing less.

In my second year as bishop — in spite of the challenges we have faced — I remain confident that the future that lies ahead of us in the North American Lutheran Church is one that will be blessed by God.

Evidence to the reasons for that confidence, along with the promise of God's Holy Spirit and the truth of the resurrection power of Jesus, is the simple fact that I have seen God at work through the efforts of our staff, our elected leaders, our NALS president and staff, as well as in the congregations and mission districts throughout the NALC.

Our work, this past year, needed to adjust to meet the changes and challenges we faced. But God never slowed down. His transforming work never stopped. I look forward to our gathering in Corpus Christi, to reconnecting with many of you, and to finding new ways to support each other and to work together to shine the saving and life-giving Light of our Lord Jesus Christ.

SPEAKERS FOR 2021 BRAATEN-BENNE LECTURES IN THEOLOGY

The speakers have been announced for the 2021 Carl E. Braaten and Robert D. Benne Lectures in Theology. The annual theological conference, held during Lutheran Week, is Aug. 3-4 in Corpus Christi, Texas.

The 2021 Lutheran Week of the North American Lutheran Church will focus on the person of God, the Father.

Continuing the six-year cycle focusing on the persons and work of the Holy Trinity, the Braaten-Benne Lecture series and the 2021 NALC Mission Convocation will each aspire to point to the nature and being of God the Father, who is creator of heaven and earth.

The speakers for this year's lectures are:



Paige Hochschild



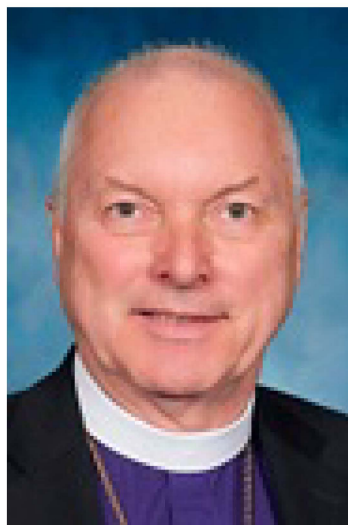
Patrick Henry Reardon



Eric M. Riesen



Amy C. Schiffrin



Ray R. Sutton



Nathan Howard Yoder

The Rev. Dr. Nathan

Howard Yoder will introduce and frame the theme, giving a history of the doctrine of God the Father. Dr. Yoder serves as pastor of St. Martin's Lutheran Church in Maiden, North Carolina. He is the dean of the Catawba Valley Mission District of the Carolinas Mission Region. He also serves on the NALC Commission for Theology and Doctrine, and chairs the Braaten-Benne Lectures in Theology.

Dr. Paige Hochschild will be discussing the current trend in religious studies to curtail masculine language in speech about God, as well as the

apostolic response to this movement and the need for faithful persistence in addressing God as Father and using complementary language. Dr. Hochschild is a Roman Catholic who serves as the chair of theology at Mount St. Mary's University.

The Rev. Patrick Henry Reardon will be speaking on how the gnostic heresy (back then and right now) is linked implicitly to a rejection of the God of the Old Testament and an apostolic understanding of God

Continued on Page 9

Continued from Page 8

the Father. Friar Reardon is an archpriest of the Antiochian Orthodox Christian Archdiocese, author, lecturer, podcaster and senior editor of *Touchstone Magazine: A Journal of Mere Christianity*.

The Rev. Dr. Eric M. Riesen will be speaking on our address of God as Father as commanded by Jesus in the Lord's Prayer. Pastor Riesen is the president of the North American Lutheran Seminary and author of *The Christian Faith: A Catechism for the Curious*.

The Rev. Dr. Amy C. Schifrin will be speaking on how the divine name of God revealed in the Old Testament relates to our understanding of God the Father — revealed in Christ as the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob — while at the same time speaking in Trinitarian terms. Pastor Schifrin is associate

professor of liturgy and homiletics for the North American Lutheran Seminary and Trinity School for Ministry. She is also NALS president emeritus.

The Rev. Dr. Ray R. Sutton will be speaking on the significance of the title "Abba" in the New Testament to our Trinitarian theology. Bishop Sutton serves as the Presiding Bishop of the Reformed Episcopal Church and the Ordinary of the Diocese of Mid America. He is also the dean of the Province and Ecumenical Affairs of the Anglican Church in North America, of which the Reformed Episcopal Church is a founding member and special jurisdiction.

Registration for the lectures is \$150 and includes Wednesday lunch and a printed copy of a book containing the lectures that will be published. For more information on Lutheran Week or to register go to lutheranweek.com.

WOMEN OF NALC ANNUAL GATHERING

The Women of the NALC Annual Gathering is on Tuesday, Aug. 3, in Corpus Christi, Texas. It begins at 8:30 a.m. and is scheduled to conclude at 5 p.m.

Join Women of the NALC from across North America for a day of fellowship, Bible study and business.

Featured speakers will be Pastor Amy Carpenter of Christ the King Lutheran Church in Evans, Georgia, and NALC Bishop Dan Selbo.

There will be time to engage and share ideas with women from other churches and mission districts. Our time together will also include selection of the Mission Bank recipients for 2021-2022, selection of new members for the WNALC Council, and approval of the WNALC budget.

Join in this day-long annual gathering to be filled with strength and hope to bring back to your congregation and women's groups.

Registration fee is \$80 and includes lunch.

LUTHERAN WEEK

Continued from Page 3

Three workshops will be offered before and during the convocation for those who are interested. There is no extra charge for the workshops. The workshops — offered at 8:30 a.m. Tuesday and at 7:30 p.m. Wednesday — are:

+ Living and Giving Stewardship with the Rev. Dona Johnson.

+ Youth Ministry with Gary and Laurie Pecuch.

+ Life-to-Life Discipleship with the Rev. Phil Gagnon.

Registration fee for the NALC Mission Convocation is \$250 and includes lunch and dinner on Thursday and lunch on Friday.

You can register for all of the events of Lutheran Week online at lutheranweek.com. A link to discounted hotel reservations is on the site.

Materials for Lutheran Week will be posted on the Lutheran Week website. Streaming video of the events of Lutheran Week also will be available.

ONE MORE!

Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy.

— Exodus 20:8 ESV

As I was preparing one of my reports for the 2021 NALC Mission Convocation, I shared some information related to the current reality of our congregations. As we are aware that many congregations in North America are declining in worship attendance, it is interesting to note that one statistic has provided some clarity with regard to this decline. As some of our pastors and congregations may not read the staff reports for convocation, it seems worth noting that statistic here.

According to Sam Rainer, founder and CEO of Church Answers, in 2018, the median size of all congregations in the United States was 75 people, while most congregations are less than 100 average worshipping attendance. At the same time, the median age of church members was 73 years old.

He points out in a separate research study that much of the attendance decline is the result of a drop in frequency of worship attendance. A congregation may have the same number of participants, but they are worshipping less frequently, which lowers the average worship attendance.

Rainer writes:

Stated simply, the number one reason for the decline in church attendance is that members attend with less frequency than they did just a few years ago. Allow me to explain.

When membership becomes truly meaningful, our churches will become an unstoppable force for the Kingdom and glory of God. If the frequency of attendance changes, then attendance will respond accordingly. For example, if 200 members attend every week the average attendance is, obviously, 200. But if one-half of those members miss only one out of four weeks, the attendance drops to 175.

Did you catch that? No members left the church.



MINISTRY MATTERS

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

Everyone is still relatively active in the church. But attendance declined over 12 percent because half the members changed their attendance behavior slightly. This phenomenon can take place rather quickly in an individual church. And leaders in the church are often left scratching their heads because the behavioral change is so slight, almost imperceptible. We really don't notice when someone who attends four times a month begins to attend only three times a month. Nor do we typically catch it when the twice-a-month attendee becomes a once-a-month attendee.

This is an insight that most of us have missed. We see worship attendance decline over time and assume it is loss of members. Sure, some congregations are losing members, but Rainer's research indicates that "the number one reason for the decline in church attendance is that members attend with less frequency than they did just a few years ago."

The good news in this statistic is that to reverse the trend and perhaps increase worship attendance, we need no exciting, high-powered evangelism strategy, no marketing campaign and no influx of new members.

Indeed, to increase congregational worship attendance, it takes only members making a commitment to attend worship *one more* Sunday than usual!

If you attend only once a month, make a commitment to worship twice a month. If you are worshipping

Continued on Page 11

twice a month, make a commitment to worship three times a month.

And what impact does increasing worship attendance make in a congregation? Why will it matter?

1. Increasing, rather than declining, worship attendance generates excitement, a positive attitude and hope for the future.
2. Increasing worship attendance uplifts and encourages pastors and will, over time, improve preaching.
3. While we may wish it were not the case, many members still give financially only when they attend worship. Increasing worship attendance always increases giving.
4. Weekly worship attendance, like so many aspects of faith, is a helpful spiritual habit. The more regular we are in worship, the more we develop the habit of weekly worship.
5. We are being obedient to God's Word, where we are admonished, "Don't stop meeting together with other believers, which some people have gotten into the habit of doing" (Hebrews 10:25 CEB).
6. Increased personal worship attendance encourages greater participation in other areas of faith, discipleship and service. Involvement begets involvement! The more we are present and involved, the more we will want to be involved.
7. We are following our Lord and His example when we worship regularly. Scripture tells us that Jesus "went to the synagogue on the sabbath day, as was his custom" (Luke 4:16 NRSV).

In our NALC Life-to-Life Discipleship Initiative, all disciples are urged to develop a life plan — acknowledging our current reality and setting goals for faith, priorities, health, family, friends, finances and service. Clearly, one important goal might be to attend worship *one more time* at least, each month, than is your current practice.

Setting such a goal may be especially helpful as many have gotten out of the habit of regular, in-person worship during the pandemic. Sam Rainer estimates worship attendance post-COVID-19 will be 20 percent lower than before the pandemic. Getting back to worship will take intentionality on the part of all of us. And it will benefit you, your pastor and your congregation!

And what if you are worshipping every Sunday already? Then make a commitment, perhaps, to bring *one more* person to worship with you! Bring an elderly member who no longer drives to worship with you. Bring a grandchild, neighbor or friend with you to worship. Invite someone new to join your congregation in worship. This is at the heart of Life-to-Life Discipleship!

Maybe "*One More!*" can be a new theme for NALC congregations as we choose not to accept decline in the church, but choose, instead, resurrection and renewal!

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

LIFE-TO-LIFE DISCIPLESHIP WORKSHOP

Two identical workshops on the NALC Life-to-Life Discipleship emphasis will be offered during Lutheran Week — at 8:30 a.m. on Tuesday, Aug. 3, and at 7:30 p.m. on Wednesday, Aug. 4. There is no additional charge to attend the workshops.

Come and learn what our Life-to-Life Discipleship Team has been up to, how the discipleship guide training fits in with our CREDO model and how both can be useful in creating a faithful, joyful, disciple-making culture in your congregation.

NALC DISASTER RESPONSE UPDATE

NALC Disaster Response is responding to several wildfires burning in Idaho and eastern Oregon.

Volunteers from NALC Disaster Response are delivering a 26-foot box truck of emergency relief supplies including health kits, quilts, Bibles and other materials that are urgently needed.

Volunteers from the Central Pacific Mission District are delivering a load of water, socks and underwear to the firefighters who are being served by Pastor Alan Daughtery and Trinity Lutheran Church in Lewiston, Idaho.

The NALC Disaster Response shower trailer is being transported from Texas to Idaho.

Volunteer teams from Prince of Peace Lutheran Church in Fayetteville, Georgia, and Emmanuel Lutheran Church in Rochester, Minnesota, are providing long-term recovery support through St. Paul Lutheran Church in Pensacola, Florida, rebuilding homes damaged by Hurricane Sally. Other congregations have also been involved there. Hurricane Sally damaged more than 25,000 homes last September. Thousands of families are still living in homes with blue tops covering their roofs.



Home in Florida damaged by flooding



Members of Prince of Peace Lutheran Church in Fayetteville, Georgia, helped clean up home in Pensacola, Florida, damaged by Hurricane Sally.

Donations may be sent to NALC Disaster Response; P.O. Box 860565; Minneapolis, MN 55486-0565.



This NALC Disaster Response truck was loaded by volunteers before being leaving for Idaho to help with relief efforts due to wildfires.

MEKANE YESUS SEMINARY UPDATE AND INVITATION

It is time for an update on the building project at the Mekane Yesus Seminary in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. We want to keep the focus on this exciting work.

The seminary is in the process of building a new six-story building. It is a joint project involving the seminary and Lutheran Bible Translators, with support from members of the North American Lutheran Church and Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod.

The new building will be for multi-purpose use. The bottom floors will be rented out to retail businesses to generate income for the seminary. The vision is to move the seminary along into being financially self-sufficient. Some of the upper floors will be used for classrooms, offices and guest rooms. And some of the floors will be used by Lutheran Bible Translators for their ongoing work of translating the Bible into the many languages in Ethiopia and beyond.

This is a transforming venture. Not only will the seminary move toward more financial stability, but Bible translation is so vital in this land where the Church is growing rapidly. And the additional space will enhance the work at the seminary. This is a win-win-win situation!

The project is moving on remarkably well. The building has been erected up through the sixth floor and work is continuing nicely. There are challenges, of course. One of the big ones is a shortage of concrete in the country. The seminary folks have worked long and hard to procure enough concrete to keep things going. It is often a day-by-day challenge. But the work is actually ahead of schedule!

The goal is to have the building finished, functioning and paid for by this fall. By the way, 2022 is the 500th anniversary of Luther translating the New Testament into German. One of the plans is to celebrate this 500th anniversary with a dedication service in the



new building. We are looking to a grand celebration with solid NALC participation.

The story of this work is spreading in the NALC. We will continue to share newsletter updates and conversations. In addition, at the NALC's Pastors' Conference in San Antonio in May, Pastor John Conrad of the NALC and Pastor David Snyder of Lutheran Bible Translators lead an informational gathering about this work and 25 NALC pastors attended. Support and excitement is growing!

Our invitation is for you to support this work. First and foremost, please pray. Pray for the seminary, the building project, for Lutheran Bible Translators, and for Dr. Bruk Ayele Asale, the seminary president. And second, numerous NALC pastors and congregations are joining to assist. We are presently forming an advisory group of NALC people to tell this story and support this work. If you would like to be part of this, please contact Pastor John Conrad at jtcswede@gmail.com or Pastor Mark Braaten at mbraaten@oslctyler.org.

Lutheran Bible Translators is a recognized ministry of the NALC. You can learn more about their ministry at lbt.org. The Ethiopian Evangelical Lutheran Church Mekane Yesus is a full communion partner of the NALC. You can learn more about the EECMY seminary at mekaneyesusseminary.org.

MISSION UPDATE FROM DAKOTA BOYS AND GIRLS RANCH

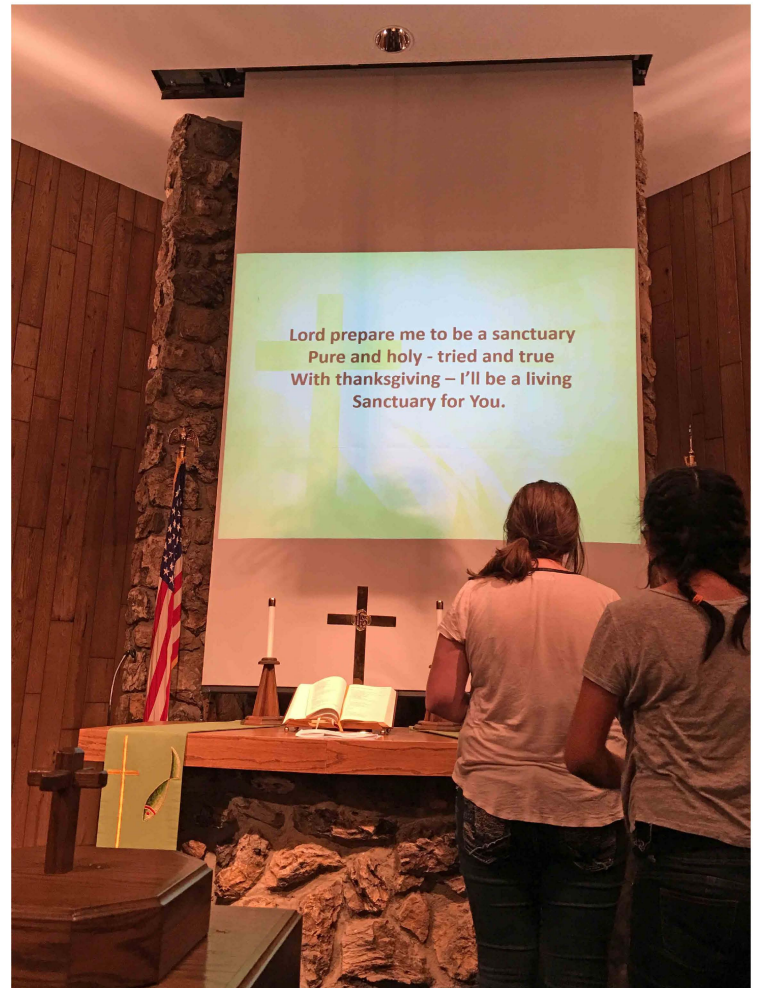
By Joy Jones

Chapel services are at 4:30 p.m. on Thursdays on all the campuses of Dakota Boys and Girls Ranch. We do not require children or staff to attend, but many do.

Recently, I was on campus in Minot, North Dakota, for chapel. Minot is our largest campus, our seminal campus. Chaplain Rick Jones and Deaconess Kelly Bristow do a beautiful job of bringing God's Word to the kids in a way that relates to them.

The message was from Romans 13, where Paul talks about how to think about "authorities." Chaplain Rick was able to make sense of God's delegation to "authorities" in His name, while acknowledging that many in authority had been the very people who had victimized these children. He explained how the authority was from God, but how the person in that position may be in the clutches of sin.

I may not be doing a great job of paraphrasing him, but the children were given the information to separate the concept of "authority" from the misuse of that authority. That was wonderful, but not the most striking part of chapel that day. I always anticipate Chaplain Rick will do well in His name. I always learn something.



What did strike me was the group's reaction to the young boy who read Paul's message. You see, every week, Chaplain Rick and Deaconess Kelly ask children to volunteer to help with the service. Some children help Kelly with the music. One child is tasked with lighting and putting out the candles. Each of the Scripture readings is read by a different child.

The second reader, the one for Paul's writing, was a boy about 11. When Chaplain Rick asked for volunteers, the boy was quick to raise his hand. He walked quickly and confidently up to the microphone. Chaplain Rick stood off to the side, as he always does, ready to help if necessary.

Continued on Page 15

As soon as the boy started to speak, it was obvious the reading was beyond his ability. He simply can't read well, yet. His school time has been disrupted so many times by the goings-on in his family, and then the changing of schools multiple times. Chaplain Rick quickly stepped up and coached him on each word as he spoke them into the microphone.

It was a long, awkward, tedious process. It was hard to follow the reading. I know in my home church there would have been shuffling as people shifted uncomfortably. Probably even some sighs if Scripture was presented so ponderously. The reader would probably be encouraged to find other ways to contribute.

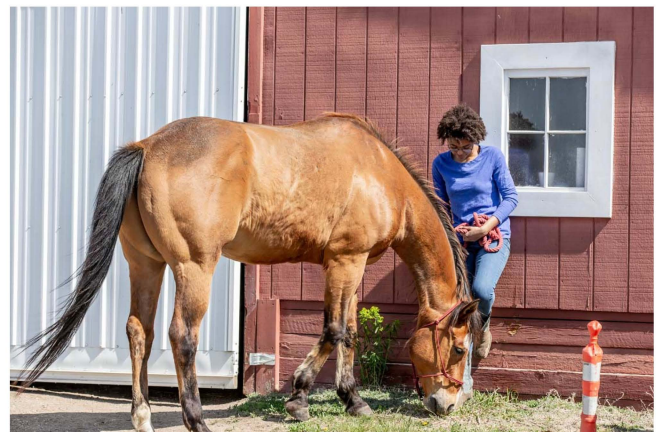
But not in that Ranch Chapel. I sat and listened and watched. The room, filled with behaviorally, psychiatrically, trauma-affected kids, was perfectly still. Even the jittery kids sat quietly. Everyone waited. When he was done, as is our custom, everyone clapped.



I don't know what was going on in each child's mind as they sat quietly. I do know most of them have felt the sting of being shamed in front of others. I know most of them have been rejected or bullied or abused. I know in that moment, I felt God's mercy and grace come through those children in a way I could almost reach out and touch. Please pray for our staff and kids.

How can you connect today? Send a message of hope. Hope is a very powerful thing. For kids at Dakota Boys and Girls Ranch, hope can mean the difference between successful treatment and giving up on life. You can provide hope for our kids. Your message will let a boy or girl know that someone cares and wants them to succeed. It's easy to do and takes just a few minutes. Send a message of hope to a child at the ranch by visiting this link: dakotaranch.org/ways-to-give/hope-notes-2.

Dakota Boys and Girls Ranch is a recognized ministry of the NALC. To learn more or partner with them, please visit www.dakotaranch.org.



MISSION UPDATE FROM JON GOWIN IN GAMBIA

For the ministry of this service is not only supplying the needs of the saints but is also overflowing in many thanksgivings to God. – 2 Corinthians 9:12 ESV

Songs and prayers of thanksgiving rang out at the headquarters of Gambian-based Indigenous Mission of West Africa (IMWA). Christian ministers gathered there for the handing over of evangelistic outreach materials to seven individuals who have been extraordinarily active in ministry in various parts of the country and to representatives of three local ministries that partner with IMWA.

Fadil Ceesay, IMWA director, reiterated the mission's goal of training and equipping indigenous missionaries so they can effectively carry out the Great Commission tasks of preaching and teaching in Gambia and neighboring countries. Pastor Steven Musa-Kormayea emphasized, from Romans 10, that partnership is the key to success in mission because "the Lord's blessing is transmitted through partnerships."

Partnership was clearly on display that warm, sunny day as 10 ministers of the Gospel rode away on motorcycles, each carrying a Jesus Film Project backpack and supplies of Bibles and audio Bibles. These materials were donated by ministries in the United States and Germany.

A mission grant from North American Lutheran Church was used to purchase 10 new motorcycles at the cost of about \$800 each. These Chinese-made motorcycles are becoming more common in Gambia. They are extremely useful on dirt roads in rural areas, especially in the rainy season.

The Jesus Film Project supplied backpacks, each of which contains all the equipment necessary for showing the "JESUS" film to a group of people. Ten backpacks, with the film (plus two versions of it)



A minister poses with one of 10 motorcycles donated by the North American Lutheran Church to assist mission work in Gambia.

dubbed into a number of languages spoken in Gambia, were donated and brought over.

The "JESUS" film, which closely follows the Gospel of Luke, has proven to be a very effective evangelistic tool and has been dubbed into more than 1,500

Continued on Page 17

languages since it was released in 1979. You can read more about it at jesusfilm.org.

Faith Comes By Hearing donated 150 audio Bible players loaded with the New Testament and portions of the Old Testament in Mandinka, a language widely spoken in the country.

In addition, Gideons International donated 100 New Testaments, and hundreds of Bibles were purchased in-country with funds donated from churches in the United States and Germany.

IMWA will follow up on how all these materials are being used. It was a positive sign when later that night, one of the recipients sent pictures of a group of people watching the “JESUS” film. Having made the trip back to the North Bank on his motorcycle, he apparently couldn’t wait until the next day to start using the equipment for evangelism! Motivation and zeal are certainly not lacking with these faithful servants.

That’s what partnering with indigenous workers looks like.



The people of Gambia have caught the vision for home mission, and more and more of them are getting involved in Great Commission activities. In doing so, they encounter shortages of much-needed materials.

+ Meanwhile, funds and resources are available for the asking outside the country, as we found out when we applied (through our mission, Bethany Gateways) for the grant and the backpacks and when we requested Bibles. It’s a matter of supply and demand and making the necessary connections.



To the donors mentioned above, and to the churches and individuals who donated to those ministries — and, as always, to our own supporters — we are saying thank you for “your partnership in the gospel” (Philippians 1:5). We pray that God will keep supplying and multiplying, so your generosity can continue.

Jon Gowin is an NALC Global Worker, serving with Bethany Gateways, in Gambia. To learn more about the Gowin family, or to partner with them in ministry, please visit thenalc.org/partners/jonathan-gowin.

MISSION UPDATE FROM PASTOR VALERY HRYHORYK IN BELARUS

Spring is a wonderful time! The nature awakens from wintery sleep. The birds are singing. The thunderstorms begin.

We were blessed to be born in Belarus, a country with four seasons. Every season has its beauty and charm. Spring is also a time of change. Here is a ministry update from Belarus Lutheran Missionary Fellowship (BLMF).

Political situation in Belarus

In the wake of the election, thousands of Belarusians have taken to the streets in what has become the largest and most persistent show of opposition to Alexander Lukashenko, the president of Belarus.

More than 33,000 people have been arrested in a crackdown that has left much of the opposition leadership in exile or prison. The European Union, the United States and other nations have refused to recognize the declared election results and slapped sanctions on Lukashenko and other senior officials.

Lukashenko has recently claimed that he was the target of an assassination plot. Lukashenko said on state TV that he and his children were the targets of the alleged assassination plot. He claimed it had been approved by "the top political leadership" of the



United States, though he provided no evidence to back up the claim.

The political crises in Belarus continues, and the controlled lawmakers continue creating severely restrictive civil rights laws to prevent further protests and democratic changes in the country. People can go to jail just for having a white-red-white flag on their balcony.

Please continue praying for Belarus, for God to have mercy on the nation in this difficult time.

Theological seminar

We remain in the COVID-19 pandemic. A third wave was announced in Belarus. However, the government is not taking sufficient measures to protect the people. We hear stories of people getting infected with COVID-19 in the hospitals as they keep the infected and the not infected together. People continue to die, but officially there is no COVID-19 in Belarus. In this situation, we try to be very careful and to do our projects while avoiding large numbers of people.



Continued on Page 19

A theological seminar took place in Vitebsk. We were reminded about the power of prayer. The seminar was based on a book by the Norwegian pastor Ole Hallesby called "From the world of prayer."

Kristina Luashova, our friend from Slovakia, also took part in the seminar online. Kristina and Tomash take active parts in our summer Bible camps. Thank you, Lord, for this event in the middle of the pandemic.

A new way of distributing Christian books

We have started a new creative way of theological books and Bible distribution. Andrey, one of our parishioners, is a taxi driver. We thought that distributing Bibles and Christian literature among his taxi clients was a good idea — a very creative way of distributing the Word of God. Taxi drivers like to talk while driving. Why not talk about spiritual things? More than 50 books have been distributed already!

We hope and pray that the people who received such a gift in Andrey's taxi will request more information about the Christian faith. Please pray for this initiative and ask the Lord to send interested people in Andrey's taxi.

Good Book Publishers books were sent to St. Petersburg, Russia, a month ago, however, the recipient has not received it. This has never happened before. We hope this is not a global failure in the mail system.



A large number of books is getting ready to go to Ukraine. Though the relationship between Ukraine and Belarus is worsening because of the friendship between Belarus and Russia (Ukraine has officially declared Russia to be an aggressor), we pray that this fact will not hinder the mail system between the countries. Though anything is possible in this dynamically changing situation. Please pray for the distribution of Good Book Publisher's books and for the new and creative ways of distribution.

Pastoral visit to Orsha district

It was a great joy to visit the BLMF team in the Orsha district and to find the brothers and sisters there in good physical and spiritual health. After a short service, we shared Holy Communion. As David said

Continued on Page 20

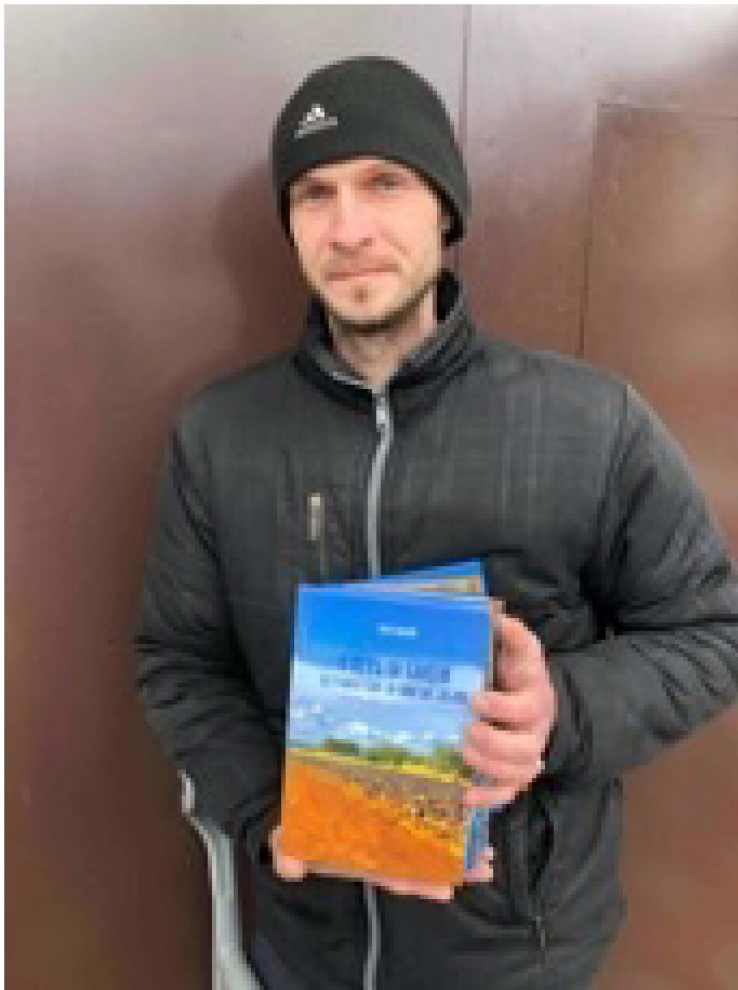
in Psalm 133:1: “How good and pleasant it is when brothers live together in unity.” Orsha is one of the strategic cities for rebuilding historical Lutheranism in Belarus. Sonya Baturevich is the head of the youth and children’s work in that region. Please pray for Orsha and for the congregation and the leaders there.

Ministry to handicapped children

A handbook by a Norwegian author Jostein Boldoy about how to treat the handicapped children in the church was published in e-format by Good Book Publishers.

The book is a well-thought guide on the confirmation classes for handicapped children in a congregation. Please give thanks to God with us for this very helpful resource. To God be the glory!

Music ministry



Music ministry continues to be our priority. While on quarantine we paid attention to writing new songs. It is a pity that all the planned concerts were cancelled because of the pandemic.

However, the Lord gave us a wonderful opportunity. We received a call from a local TV station with a suggestion to make a TV show about our music group. This is a great opportunity to tell people about faith and help them think about God and the eternal things. Please thank the Lord with us for this. Leonid Goldenberg (man with his thumb up) is our music group sound engineer. Leonid is a Jew. Welcome, Leonid, to the team! Please pray for Leonid to get to know Jesus.

Dear brothers and sisters, we are grateful to God for you, our faithful supporters, at this difficult time for the whole world. I keep on repeating that without you, the Lord’s faithful people, our ministry in Belarus could hardly be possible. May the Lord continue to bless you as you bless others! Please continue praying for God’s kingdom in this part of the world.

Pastor Valery Hryhoryk is an NALC Global Worker, serving with Spiritual Orphans Network (SON), in Belarus. For more information, or to learn how you can partner with him in ministry, please visit thenalc.org/partners/valery-hryhoryk.

MISSION UPDATE FROM HOUSTON OROMO EVANGELICAL CHURCH

We at the Oromo Evangelical Church in Houston, Texas, thank all of you who have so generously and freely given us encouragement, moral support, physical support, prayers and financial support for the past 10 years. This has allowed us to grow tenfold since we began our affiliation with the North American Lutheran Church. We are now in a new chapter of our development as a church devoted to the worship of Jesus Christ.

We have just purchased 1.88 acres of land to build our first church building, by the grace of God, allowing us to be closer to those whom we serve. We are so thankful for all that you have contributed so we can accomplish our goal of going forth to make disciples of Christ to all people.

As we enter in the journey to increase our membership, outreach and presence as a church committed to Jesus, we acknowledge that without your support we could have never reached the point of development we reached at this juncture. We have been blessed with our relationship with you and treasure it always.

We now are faced with new challenges as we must pay the remaining amount within two years. But we feel confident that with God's grace we can succeed with this very ambitious program committed to



discipleship for the sake of Jesus Christ. Our motto is "Not Finished, Just Begun in 2021."

To learn more or partner with the Oromo Evangelical Church in Houston, please visit thenalc.org/partners/oromo-evangelical-church-houston.

WOMEN OF NALC WANT TO "STUFF THE TRUCK" FOR DISASTER RESPONSE

The Women of the NALC are collecting gift cards from Home Depot, Lowe's and Walmart during Lutheran Week for their annual "Stuff the (Tonka) Truck" initiative for NALC Disaster Response.

Those attending Lutheran Week are encouraged to drop off the gift cards at the Women of the NALC booth in the display area.



MISSION UPDATE FROM PASTOR DIDI PANZO IN DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF THE CONGO

After seven months of waiting, finally, our container arrived on May 20 at the Matadi Port. The container took three weeks to be cleared before getting out. It was an extensive process that caused stress and anxiety, but finally the team on the ground was able to finalize the customs process, and it was in the team's possession on June 11.

Since it was a shared container, the team on the ground opened it, and each party got what belonged to them. Our boxes and the car arrived safely in Boma and are stored in the compound where we live. We are so thankful to God for protection, no matter how long that took, and thanks to all of you who have been praying for the safe arrival of the container.



Graduation

It is a joy as family to see Sarah finishing her time in high school. Ten years ago, we wondered how it would work for Sarah to study, as we are engaging in mission, especially going to Ecuador where the Spanish language is spoken. We find in Sarah, the gift of languages and that helped her to connect well in the Ecuadorian school system where she made good improvements.

When they assigned us to the next mission station in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), we



Continued on Page 23

began to wonder again about Sarah going to a country where the school system is not strong compared to the United States and other third world countries. We took the risk to leave Sarah in the USA for a better education and trusted that she would be under God's care. It was not easy to make that decision, but as family we vowed to join hands and to see Sarah finish high school.

On June 12 she received her high school diploma and is ready to move to the next level. She was admitted to Penn State University with a 75 percent scholarship. She will be going to the State College, Pennsylvania, main campus. In July, she will be traveling to the DRC to spend time with us before starting college. Let us to continue to hold her in our prayers.

Prayer Requests

- + Praise God for the safe arrival of the container.
- + Pray for Sarah's next step in college for God to grant wisdom and provision.
- + Pray for Community of Confessional Lutheran Churches in Congo (CELCCO) and the bishop's upcoming consecration.



- + Pray for the DRC government for its stability.
- + Pray for our safe return in the DRC.

Pastor Didi Panzo is an NALC Global Worker, serving with the World Mission Prayer League (WMPL), in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. To learn more about the Panzo family or to partner with them in ministry, please visit thenalc.org/partners/didi-panzo.

YOUTH AND FAMILY MINISTRY LUTHERAN WEEK WORKSHOP

By Laurie Pecuch

Join us during Lutheran Week for a workshop coming out of unusual times titled "Youth Ministry after COVID – Now What?"

In his book, *Canoeing the Mountains: Christian Leadership in Uncharted Territory*, Tod Bolsinger tells the story of how U.S. President Thomas Jefferson commissioned Lewis and Clark to find a water route to the Pacific Ocean. On the way, they found themselves in the Rocky Mountains. They were in uncharted territory. They were off the map. The familiar was gone! As the COVID-19 pandemic

subsides, we find our youth ministry world to be off our maps. Our normal game plan has been disrupted.

So, now what? Come join the conversation. We are hosting two identical workshops – at 8:30 a.m. on Tuesday, Aug. 3, and at 7:30 p.m. on Wednesday, Aug. 4. For more information on Lutheran Week or to register for the workshop go to lutheranweek.com.

Also, please stop by our booth in the vendors area during Lutheran Week and say, "Hi!"

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

GREAT COMMISSION SOCIETY

The purpose of the Great Commission Society (GCS) of the NALC is to mobilize disciples for the work of the Great Commission. Our mission is to proclaim the Gospel of Jesus Christ to a world that is in desperate need of the Good News. We propose to do this by networking congregations and individuals who have a passion for the proclamation of the Gospel and a commitment to the calling of the Great Commission.



grown each time. They have grown in the number of participants, in the depth of discussion and in community. They have been a blessing. We will continue to explore this ministry offering as long as participants are hungry for a virtual community that is grounded in God's Word, prayer, learning and exploring how to lead and live as ambassadors and agents of God's grace.

The Great Commission Society continues to fulfill its mission to proclaim the Gospel of Jesus Christ and network those who have a passion for living the Great Commission.

In 2020 and 2021, the GCS has continued to connect with mission districts and leaders as the Mission Connections Team called every mission district dean or district mission team leader. We make these calls, not to push an agenda, but to listen, encourage and pray for leaders. These calls offer a connection and provide opportunities to hear the fantastic stories of the Holy Spirit at work in our congregations and to gather ideas and inspiration to share with others and enable us to foster connections between leaders with similar goals. These calls are an excellent way to not only hear of God's faithfulness but also to become more aware and see the present joys and challenges happening in the field.

Last spring, the team heard the need for connection, so we offered a six-week digital book study as a time to gather and find community with other leaders. At the end of the study, participants asked when the next one would be, so we began researching books and offered another study in January and February. We added devotions led by NALC staff and leaders and a dedicated time of prayer for each other.

Participants requested another book study, so we are finishing our third book study. The studies have

The other new project the Great Commission Society accepted in 2020 was offering a digital missions conference called "Unveiled." Led by input the Mission Connections Team received from their calls, we designed a three-day online conference experience that offered daily worship and biblical teaching, mission stories, mission engagement tools, prayer and even a time to gather virtually with people in live-time during post-conference coffee hours hosted by different NALC leaders and mission partners.

"Unveiled" had two goals: raise money for the Great Commission Society grant fund and offer community for mission-driven leaders. By the power of the Holy Spirit and a team of 60 experts and volunteers, the goals were met. We had more than 120 participants and raised \$5,000 to give in grants to mission leaders.

In 2021 and 2022, the Great Commission Society will continue to provide the background structure and support for connecting those seeking to partner with others in preaching and living out the Gospel Jesus Christ shared. We will continue to call and listen and be guided by what is shared by mission district deans and congregational leaders. We will continue to be available to coach leaders and teams as they discern and take on their own missions, and we will continue to seek ways to support and invite community among those living the Great Commission.