



NALC News

North American Lutheran Church

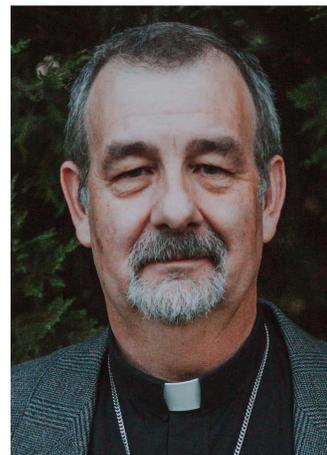
May-June 2021

NOMINATIONS ARE STILL OPEN FOR POSITIONS TO BE ELECTED AT 2021 MISSION CONVOCATION

The Nominating Committee of the North American Lutheran Church has announced the names of two pastors and one lay person who have been nominated to serve on positions to be elected at the 2021 Mission Convocation Aug. 4-6 in Corpus Christi, Texas.



Jess Abbott



Jeffray Greene



Joel Williams

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

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

The Rev. Dr. Jess Abbott of Loveland, Ohio, has been nominated for the clergy position on the Executive Council.

The Rev. Dr. Jeffray S. Greene of Brooks, Georgia, has been nominated for the Court of Adjudication.

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

The Nominating Committee is still seeking the names of candidates for nomination to serve on Executive

Council and Court of Adjudication. The final deadline for submitting nominations is June 16.

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

The Court of Adjudication hears appeals from disciplinary decisions; resolves questions of interpretation of NALC governing documents. Both pastors and lay members may be elected to the Court of Adjudication.

Congregations are encouraged to nominate individuals for any of the open positions.

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SPEAKERS ARE ANNOUNCED 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 at the American Bank Center 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



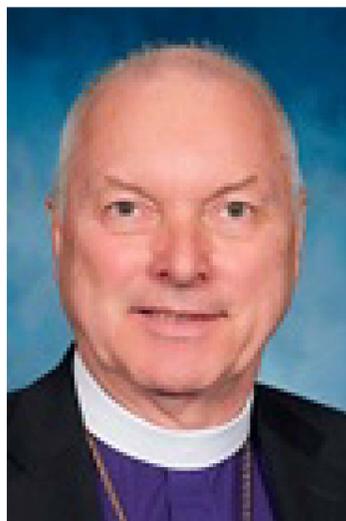
Patrick Henry Reardon



Eric M. Riesen



Amy C. Schifrin



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. Pastor Yoder is the dean of the Catawba Valley Mission District of the Carolinas Mission Region, serves on the NALC Commission for Theology and Doctrine, and chairs the NALC 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

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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 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 President Emeritus and Associate Professor of Liturgy and Homiletics for the North American Lutheran Seminary.

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 NOW OPEN FOR 2021 LUTHERAN WEEK

Registration is now open for the events of Lutheran Week Aug. 2-6 in Corpus Christi, Texas. You can register online at lutheranweek.com.

The 2021 NALC Mission Convocation of the North American Lutheran Church is Aug. 4-6. The convocation is the annual meeting of the NALC.

The convocation is preceded by the Braaten-Benne Lectures in Theology on Aug. 3-4 and the Women of the NALC Annual Gathering on Aug. 3.

Three workshops will be offered before and during the convocation for those who are interested:

- + Living and Giving Stewardship with the Rev. Dona Johnson.
- + Youth Ministry with Gary and Laurie Pecuch of faithwebbing.com.
- + NALC Life-to-Life Discipleship with the Rev. Phil Gagnon.

Let's keep in touch

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Please copy and share this newsletter widely.

UNTIL OUR LORD RETURNS

During the month of May, two significant events were remembered and celebrated in the Christian Church.

The first was the day of our Lord's ascension. Forty days after Jesus' resurrection from the dead, He returned to heaven. Each week, as we confess our faith, we proclaim that Jesus "ascended into heaven, and is seated at the right hand of the Father. He will come again to judge the living and the dead." In May, we celebrated what we confess.

The second event was the celebration of Pentecost. Ten days after our Lord's ascension and 50 days after Easter, the Holy Spirit was sent to empower and equip the disciples for their ministry. On the day of Pentecost, the Holy Spirit was sent, the disciples were empowered and equipped, and the Christian Church had its start.

Before either of those events happened — our Lord's ascension and the coming of the Holy Spirit — Jesus made a promise to His followers. When He left, His promise was that He would come again. In the same way He has ascended, He promised He would return.

Until then and between those two events, He has given us His Holy Spirit. We are not left alone. We have the Spirit of God. And in and with and through the Spirit of God, we are daily and forever in and with Christ.

In the Book of Acts is a fascinating account of our Lord's ascension. Forty days after Easter, gathered together for one last time, the disciples asked a simple and a specific question of the Lord.

They said, "Lord, are you, at this time, going to restore the kingdom to Israel? Lord, are you, at this time, going to fulfill the promises you have made to us as your chosen people? Lord, are you, at this time, going to bring about the kingdom you have promised. Give us a little insight into what we might expect to be happening next, so we do not spend too much time



FROM THE BISHOP

REV. DR. DAN SELBO
BISHOP

and energy thinking and worrying about what we do not know?"

As I read that story and listen to the conversation that took place, I have to say, "Who could blame them?" The disciples were curious. Their Lord was about to leave. They wanted to know. A simple question — straightforward in what they asked. It all seemed so natural.

At the same time, it also seems as if they were still a bit unclear as to what this "following Jesus thing" was all about. His life, His death, His resurrection from the dead ... and now, His ascension back to heaven, and the disciples are left alone. "Lord, we just want to know what might be coming next. Can you give us just a small little clue?"

Honestly, I find myself, at times, as a follower of Jesus, with the same curiosity. Wanting to know what our Lord is doing. Desiring to find out what might be coming next. Curious about all of the whats and whens and hows and whose ... and the time and place and detail of how it is all going to happen and play out.

I think about some of the milestones in life — those big events that we all experience that change the direction, if not, the course of life itself — a graduation from one school to another; a plan and a direction about a career and a line of work; decisions about marriage; the birth of a new child; the possibility of a move and a new and a next chapter about to begin.

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Not to mention some of the more challenging times we face: the disappointment from a job possibility that never materialized; the loss of a job from a place or a position we had held for so long; a not-so-favorable diagnosis from the doctor; a not-so-welcomed conversation with a marriage partner who, all of a sudden, wants out; the illness or the passing of a parent or a family member or spouse.

It does not take much imagination to figure out why the disciples were so curious. Their Lord was about to leave. Their lives were about to dramatically change. “Lord, how is it going to all happen? What will be coming next? And how and when and where and why will it all come together and make sense?” I find it interesting that the Lord does not give the disciples a direct answer to their very specific and direct question. What he does, instead, is to give them a general answer followed by a specific promise and task.

The general answer is simple and clear. He said, “It is not for you to know what the Father has in mind. It is not for you to know what God has planned and prepared for his world and for his people.” There are some things, Jesus says, only the Father knows. There are some things, our Lord tells us, you need to accept in faith. And there are some things, even in faith, that the best and the most you can do is to trust.

All you need to know, Jesus says, and here is where it becomes more specific, all you need to understand is: 1. You are not alone; 2. You will have everything you need; and 3. Until I return, you have a job and a task that will never change.

As we move out of the current pandemic and as we begin to address the opportunities and the challenges in our future, there might be a number of unanswered questions in the months ahead. We might have to wait before our Lord’s will and plan become clear.

What is clear is the purpose we still have, to speak and to share the name of Jesus. What has already been answered is the purpose and calling we will always have – to live and to follow and to bear



The Ascension of Christ by Benvenuto Tisi (1481-1559)

witness to Christ. And, in spite of the unanswered questions that remain, we are not alone. We will have everything we need. And from now until the day Jesus returns, you and I have a message to speak that this world needs to hear.

Christ Centered, Mission Driven, Traditionally Grounded, and Congregationally Focused. These are at the heart of who we are as a church body and they come from the heart of the One we follow and claim as our Lord – and that will never change.

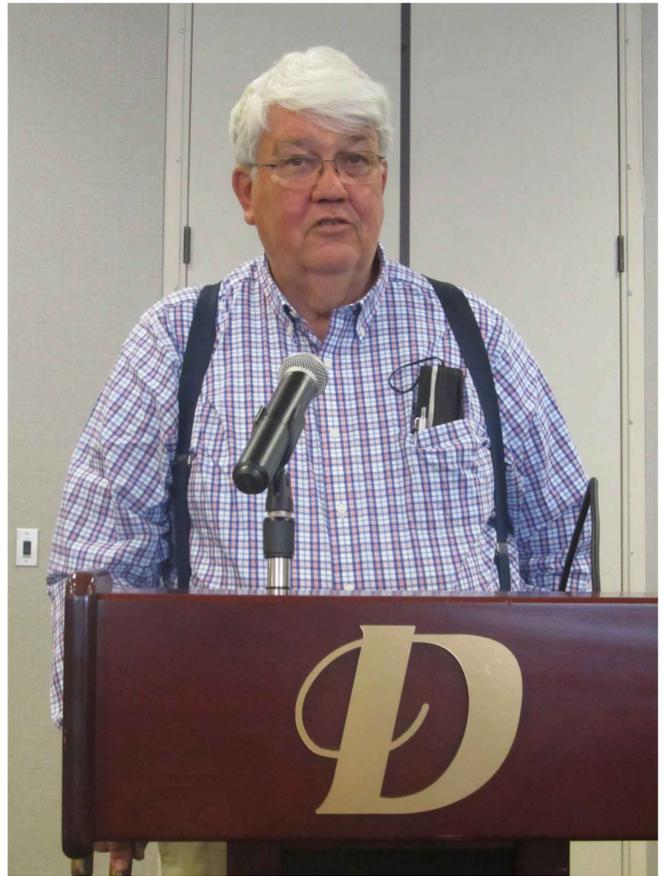
As bishop, I encourage you to never forget why we exist as a church. It is not only for us that we have been called and chosen in Jesus, but for the world and for its people and for the many who still do not know how much they are loved by God in Christ.

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Dr. Eric Riesen, Dr. Robert Benne, Dr. James Nestingen and Bishop Dan Selbo addressed topics from the keynote presentations and answered questions.

NALC PASTORS' CONFERENCE



Dr. James Nestingen addressed the topic of "Keeping the Main Things the Main Things" from his perspective as a Reformation scholar and theologian. He said justification and vocation are two main things for Lutherans. He then offered four rules for preaching.



Dr. Robert Benne addressed the topic of "Keeping the Main Things the Main Things" from his perspective as an ethics professor. He focused on three areas where the main things are being attacked: 1. Marriage and sexual ethics; 2. Sanctity of life at beginning and end; 3. The Great Commission.

SAN ANTONIO, TEXAS



Nearly 200 people attended the 2021 NALC Pastors' Conference May 4-6 at the Drury Plaza Hotel San Antonio Riverwalk.

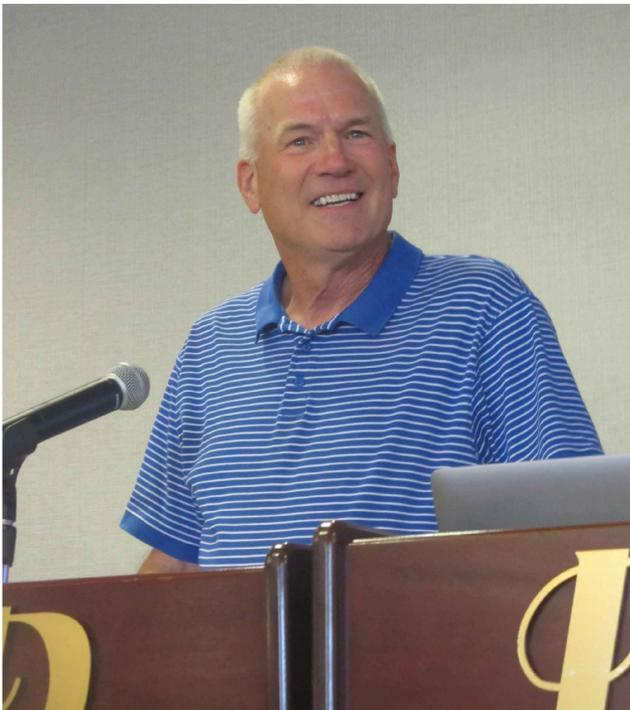


Bishop Dan Selbo led discussions on what pastors had learned from the COVID-19 pandemic and led a meeting of the NALC Ministerium.



Bishop Dan Selbo presided at a service of Holy Communion. He also led the pastors in a renewal of their ordination vows and blessed anointing oil for use in congregations.

KEEPING THE MAIN THINGS THE MAIN THINGS



Scott Kramer of Boerne, Texas, a member of the NALC Executive Council, explained proposals for restructuring the NALC including four regions and moving the NALC office to the Dallas-Fort Worth, Texas area.



Dr. Nathan Yoder presented a draft of a statement on sacramental practices on behalf of the NALC Commission on Theology and Doctrine. A panel of theologians answered questions regarding the draft.

SEND YOUR PASTOR TO THE 2022 NALC PASTORS' CONFERENCE

As the 2021 NALC Pastors' Conference has just concluded, it may seem ill-timed to be encouraging congregations to send their pastor to the conference next year.

And yet, the experience, education and blessings of the pastors' gathering this year are testimony to why we need to be asking and encouraging every congregation to make a commitment to send their pastor to the next NALC Pastors' Conference.

As pastors are busy and congregational funds are often a concern, it is all too easy for pastor and council to consider they are saving time and money by not sending the pastor to the pastors' conference.

Once the pattern is set, it becomes more difficult to realize what is being missed when pastors are not in attendance. What is missed? What is gained by participation in the pastors' conference?

1. Accountability. When pastors meet together, they are better able to be accountable to one another. Pastors' conferences provide time for pastors to engage in mutual conversation, especially with regard to challenges, struggles and opportunities. Pastors benefit from consultation with colleagues, helping each other to see from another perspective possible responses and outcomes. Congregational ministry is enhanced and strengthened when their pastor is not trying to be a "Lone Ranger" — doing it all on his or her own.

2. Engagement with NALC bishop and executive staff. One aspect of the pastors' conference has been intentional time for pastors to schedule dedicated time for consultation with the NALC bishop and executive staff to discuss matters of call, ministry, conflict and challenge. There is no other time in the course of the year when the bishop and executive staff are together with pastors and available for such one-on-one conversation. At the pastors' conference, the bishop and staff invite those new to the NALC to



MINISTRY MATTERS

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

introduce themselves so that a personal, life-to-life relationship may develop, strengthening our ties. Sadly, there are pastors who have never attended a pastors' conference or Lutheran Week. These pastors often become distant, isolated and unsupported, as they believe they are on their own and carry a heavy burden of pastoral leadership without the prayers and helpful perspective which may be provided by the bishop and executive staff.

3. Challenging, timely topics. As we worked our way through an unprecedented year of pandemic, the 2021 NALC Pastors' Conference keynote theme was "Keeping the Main Things the Main Things." Retired professors Dr. Jim Nestingen and Dr. Bob Benne made presentations. Building on this theme, pastors engaged in an open discussion on the question, "What have we learned during this pandemic; and "What will we take with us?" We would be missing a God-given opportunity if we fail to learn from this unusual year and lay aside some of the positive strategies and structures we developed due to COVID-19. Pastors also heard a presentation on the draft "Theology of Sacramental Practice" shared by the NALC Commission on Theology and Doctrine (CTD), with significant time for response and recommendations. Every pastor and congregation will benefit, ultimately, from this sacramental practices document, and having the chance to participate in its development was valuable for pastors and essential to the work of the CTD as it

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moves toward finalizing the draft and making it available as a study resource for congregations.

4. Time away for refreshment and renewal. “All work and no play makes Jack a dull boy.” This proverb has been cited from as early as 1659, but it is timeless wisdom that surely was realized long before. We schedule the NALC Pastors’ Conferences in February, intentionally – and in southern climates! After the busy Advent-Christmas cycle in the church year, two weeks before we enter into the Lent-Easter cycle, we offer the conferences to give pastors time away for worship together, reflection on topics of significance, mutual conversation and consolation – so that they may return renewed and refreshed to their congregations. Pastors may indeed become “dull” in their preaching and teaching, due to schedules and demands which drain them of energy and enthusiasm. Brief time away is healthy for

anyone needing renewal – and this is true for pastors as well.

All in all, the annual NALC Pastors’ Conference is a blessing for pastors and congregations and is well worth the time and money expended for participation. A word of encouragement from your council and congregation will be instrumental in ensuring that your pastor will be present for the 2022 NALC Pastors’ Conference Feb. 15-17 at the Crowne Plaza Hotel in Orlando, Florida.

Attendance in this year of pandemic was a record 194. We look forward to increasing participation each year, to strengthen congregations and the NALC, as we uplift and encourage pastors.

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

YOUTH AND FAMILY MINISTRY

By Laurie Pecuch

Monthly Webinars: We held our final “Trot Through the Bible” video webinar on May 11. You can view the video on the NALC Youth Leaders Facebook page. It took over three years to share our basic lessons via the Zoom monthly webinars. You can find the clips permanently posted on the faithwebbing.com site. Hint: On the landing page click on the “Trot through the Bible” link on the bottom left.

You can also view the webinars on our new faithwebbing.com Facebook page. The page will include items posted on the NALC Youth Leaders page as well as special posts unique to the Facebook page.

Stay tuned for details pertaining to life after the monthly webinars. We have some exciting things in the works for this fall.

Lutheran Week Connection: Youth Ministry after COVID-19 – Now what? Rebuild? Rearrange? Start



over? Maybe it is time to pull all our blocks off the table – re-strategize, rearrange, get rid of some blocks and add some new ones. Let's think this through together. Details can be found at lutheranweek.com.

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



**GOD THE FATHER
CREATES**
Lutheran Week 2021

DISCIPLE-MAKING CULTURES

2020 Vision: A church body committed to developing disciple-making congregations and cultures.

Goal: More than 200 congregations intentionally developing disciple-making cultures by 2023.

The DNA of the North American Lutheran Church is to make disciples. It has been said: "We should walk so close to the master, that we wear the dust of His footsteps upon our robes." This describes well what following our Lord Jesus ought to look like.

In this chaotic and thorn-filled world, it is not difficult to be distracted and lulled away from intimacy with the Lover of our souls to that of the world. It is always healthier and life-giving when we walk alongside each other in mutual edification and consolation. It is always better to have a fellow traveler with you.

To this end, after much conversation, hard work and prayer, the NALC Life-to-Life Discipleship Team has created an online discipleship guide training model to be used in the NALC.

The goal is to create trained discipleship guides throughout the NALC in order to be better prepared to disciple others.

Our first cohort will begin training in June of 2021, and then those trained will be encouraged to train other cohorts throughout the NALC. This online training will be made available to our mission districts and congregations.

Mission districts, pastors, leaders and congregations will be encouraged to use the discipleship guide in a variety of ways.

For example, the discipleship guide may be helpful:



+ To a pastor in recruiting CREDO Learning Teams.

+ For the purpose of learning, teaching and modeling life-to-life discipleship within the congregation.

+ In adapting the online model and manual for young adults.

+ For our ministry partners to implement in their own context.

+ As we continue to work with seminarians.

+ In creating a faithful, joyful disciple-making culture within our denomination.

In the next six to eight months, we will begin to launch other learning cohorts. If you are interested in receiving more information or joining future online cohorts for training, please visit airtable.com/shrUFNBtQWDVhHJIF.

This vision component is led by Pastor Phillip Gagnon, assistant to the bishop for domestic mission and discipleship. If you'd like to learn more, contact him at pgagnon@thenalc.org or visit thenalc.org/vision.

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I would also encourage you to not worry about what we do not yet know. What we know is clear. We are the people of God. We have a Savior whose name is Jesus. And we have been given a task, until the day He returns, to speak and to share His name.

That is all we need to know. And, finally, that is all we have been told. Everything else is left to the Father. And in the Father's hands, we are not alone, and we have, and we will always have, in Jesus, everything we need.

CONGREGATIONAL MULTIPLICATION

2020 Vision: A body of believers committed to increasing our mission outreach and congregational multiplication efforts.

Goal: Engagement of every NALC congregation in active and proactive outreach efforts by 2022.

Throughout the Easter season, we celebrated God's goodness and faithfulness. In 1 Peter 2:6 (ESV) we read:

"For it stands in Scripture: "Behold, I am laying in Zion a stone, a cornerstone chosen and precious, and whoever believes in him will not be put to shame."

There are many discouraging things that we face today in this world: a continuing global pandemic, civil unrest, political instability throughout the world and natural disasters. But these things should not come as a surprise to us since the fall in Genesis 3.

We do not ignore the challenges, but rather we proclaim the faithfulness and goodness of our God. We proclaim the Good News of Jesus Christ which does not change even in the midst of a changing world. And we know that even though other things may be shaken and fall away, that we rest securely because of the unshakable Cornerstone. We rejoice in the privilege that God has called us into mission together as living stones, built upon the rock that is Jesus Christ.

To that end, our strategy for 2020-2021 continues:

A Paradigm for Revival — in Psalm 85, we have a paradigm or blueprint for revival. It is the nature of what the renewal and revival of the Church looks like practically speaking.

Remember God's Faithfulness (Psalm 85:1-4) — The same God who has called us His own through the



death and resurrection of His Son, who has claimed us in Baptism, sealed us by His Holy Spirit, and continues to feed us at His table is faithful. He who began a good work in us will bring it to completion in the day of Jesus Christ.

Acknowledge the Present (Psalm 85:5-6) — it is critical not to dismiss our current reality. Not dismissing the difficult things that stand before us or in our midst, the struggles and our own need for repentance.

The Word (Psalm 85:7-9) — renewal and revival only come by the Word of God. It is critical that we listen and submit to the Word of God and be sustained by His Word.

Look to God's Promises (Psalm 85:10-13) — looking to the future as we are called to be ambassadors, living agents of God's grace. Living into our call of the Great Commission: "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age" (Matthew 28:19-20 ESV).

New Starts in the NALC — Starting New Missional Communities to Expand the Kingdom of God

The NALC is committed to the renewal of all our congregations, working to develop and deliver resources that challenge and open the NALC to the work of the Holy Spirit in our ministry and mission.

The apostle Paul writes, "I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the growth. So neither he who plants nor he who waters is anything, but only God who gives the growth. He who plants and he who waters are one, and each will receive his wages according to

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his labor. For we are God's fellow workers. You are God's field, God's building" (1 Corinthians 3:6-9 ESV).

In the NALC, we are embracing a different strategy for mission. Rather than the denomination being responsible for planting congregations, it is critical to put mission in the hands of congregations. Mission funds need to be in the hands of congregations. Mission projects and strategy need to be in the hands of congregations. That is why we emphasize that the NALC is Mission-Driven and Congregationally Focused.

Congregations are in the driver's seat of planting churches. Approximately 19 percent of congregations in the NALC began as a new start (church plant).

Rather than making one office responsible for mission, we make hundreds of congregations in the mission field responsible for the propagation of the Gospel – and for the planting of churches.

That is why we say the NALC does not plant churches from the denominational office. If planting churches is not done by congregations – and specifically by your congregation – it is not going to be done. That's why responsible pastors and mission congregations work individually or collectively within their mission districts to make pastors, lay leaders and members responsible for the work of mission.

To assist in this endeavor, we are mobilizing critical resources and systems.

Planting the Church of Jesus Christ is essential for God to make disciples. And that's what we are all about in the NALC. Jesus is not outsourcing the work of mission planting to others. God desires to grow the Church, and wants to use us to make it happen!

Great Commission Global Work and Initiatives

"You will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth" – Acts 1:8 ESV.

The DNA of the NALC is to become and make first-century disciples in the 21st century. One of the avenues of becoming more authentic disciples is inviting each congregation to discover three partners: local, national and global.

The primary vision of the North American Lutheran Church's International Mission Team is connecting congregations with international partners.

Several of our long-term goals that will assist us in leaning into this are:

1. Continued support of global workers during COVID-19 as we work to address special financial needs due to the pandemic.
2. Working with Spiritual Orphans Network and World Mission Prayer League to develop pipeline and strategic "kit" for adopting and deploying global workers.
3. Working with World Mission Prayer League, the Ethiopian Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus and our pan-African global youth ministry.

This vision component is led by Pastor Gemechis Buba, assistant to the bishop for missions. If you'd like to learn more, contact him at gbuba@thenalc.org or visit thenalc.org/vision.

NOMINATIONS

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

Nominees will be asked to complete the nominee biographical form and to provide a photo for publication with the biographical information.

Brief descriptions of the duties of each position and nomination and biographical forms are available at thenalc.org/nominate. Questions may be directed to the committee at nominations@thenalc.org.