



2024 NALC MISSION CONVOCATION TO MEET ONLINE ON FRIDAY, AUG. 9

The 2024 Mission Convocation of the North American Lutheran Church will be held online on Friday, Aug. 9, from 6 p.m. to 9 p.m. ET.

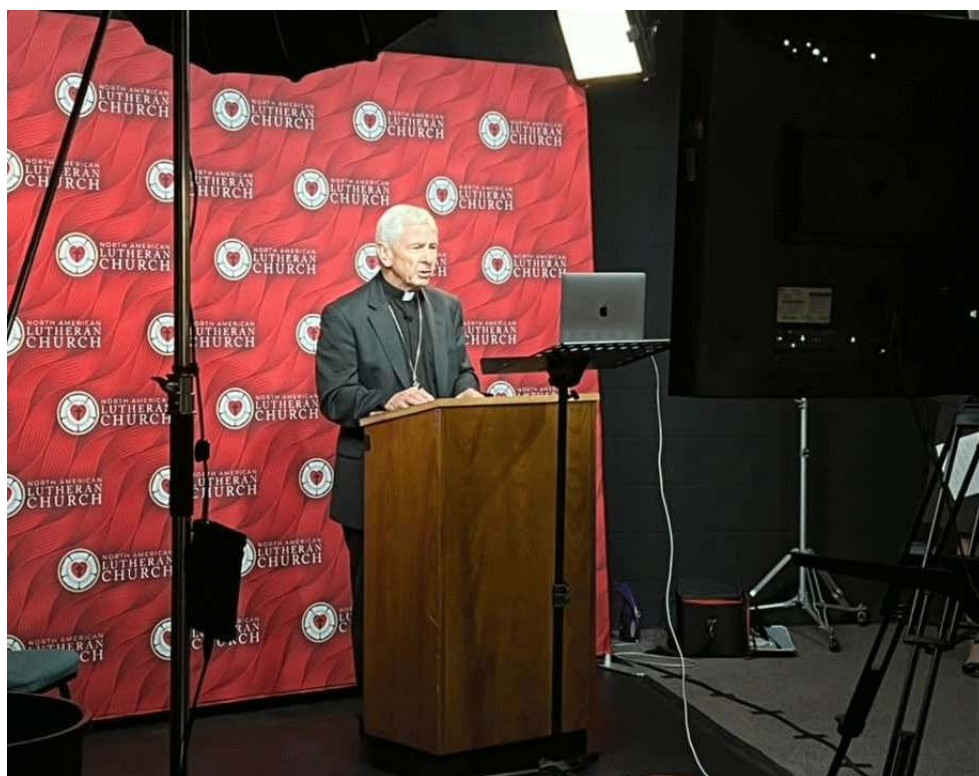
The meeting will be held over Zoom. Delegates will be able to vote and to join in discussion using their computer, tablet, or phone.

The meeting is being held online as part of the transition to holding convocations every other year.

The 2024 NALC Mission Convocation will elect one lay person and one pastor to the NALC Executive Council and one member of the Court of Adjudication—all to three-year terms. The convocation will also elect two members of the Board of Regents of the North American Lutheran Seminary to five-year terms.

The term lengths—three years instead of four for Executive Council and Court of Adjudication and five years instead of six for the Board of Regents—were changed as a part of the NALC's transition to having in-person convocations every other year.

The convocation will hear financial reports and consider a proposed \$4.4 million budget for 2025. NALC leaders will host online discussion forums on the treasurer's report and proposed budget at



Bishop Dan Selbo presiding at the 2022 NALC Mission Convocation, the NALC's last online convocation, from the studio at Trinity Anglican Seminary in Ambridge, Pennsylvania.

8 p.m. ET on both Monday, Aug. 5, and Wednesday, Aug. 7, to provide an opportunity for delegates to ask questions prior to the convocation.

Online forums on the proposed agenda and rules of procedure will be held at 7 p.m. ET both days.

The Rev. Dr. Dan Selbo, NALC bishop, will present an oral and written report to the convocation.

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

The 2024 NALC Mission Convocation, which will be held online on Friday, Aug. 9, will elect members of the NALC Executive Council and Court of Adjudication.

The convocation will elect one lay person and one ordained minister to three-year terms on the NALC Executive Council.

Jeff Janke, a member of St. Paul Lutheran Church in Oregon, Illinois, and Kathaleen Lilley, a member of Messiah Lutheran Church in Lebanon, Pennsylvania, have been nominated for the lay person position.

Nominated for the ordained minister position on the Executive Council are:

+ The Rev. Karl Faltin, a retired pastor and member of St. Peter Lutheran Church in Stettler, Alberta.

+ The Rev. Jay D. Jackson Jr., pastor of Trinity Evangelical Lutheran Church in Joppa, Maryland.

+ The Rev. Kristen Phillips, pastor of Shepherd of the Woods Lutheran Church in Jacksonville, Florida.

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

The convocation will elect one member of the Court of Adjudication to a three-year term. Samuel Duncomb of Peace Lutheran Church in Northwood, Iowa, and the Rev. Ken Reed of St. James Lutheran Church in Newton, North Carolina, have been nominated for the Court of Adjudication.



Karl Faltin



Jay Jackson



Kristen Phillips



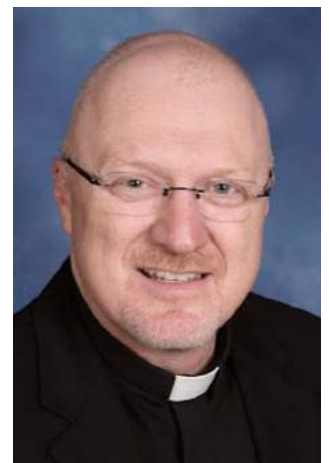
Jeff Janke



Kathaleen Lilley



Samuel Duncomb



Ken Reed

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TWO MEMBERS OF NALS BOARD OF REGENTS TO BE ELECTED

The 2024 NALC Mission Convocation, which will be held online on Friday, Aug. 9, will elect two members of the Board of Regents of the North American Lutheran Seminary (NALS) to five-year terms. Both ordained ministers and lay members may be elected to the Board of Regents.

Nominees for the Board of Regents are:

+ The Rev. Alliyah (Greaver) Blakeley, pastor of St. John Lutheran Church in Greenville, Ohio.

+ James T. Caldwell, a financial professional who is a member of Grace Evangelical Lutheran Church in Westerville, Ohio.

+ The Rev. Dr. Judson Merrell, pastor of St. Peter's Evangelical Lutheran Church in Lexington, South Carolina.

+ The Rev. Mark Metze pastor of Annapolis Lutheran Church in Edgewater, Maryland.

+ The Rev. Alan Peacock, assistant pastor of Shepherd of the Woods Lutheran Church in Jacksonville, Florida.

The Board of Regents provides oversight, supervision and direction for the NALS Network. The NALS Network includes the Seminary Center at Trinity Anglican Seminary in Ambridge, Pennsylvania; and partner seminaries Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary in Charlotte, North Carolina; Beeson Divinity School in Birmingham, Alabama; Concordia Lutheran Seminary in Edmonton, Alberta; and Fuller Theological Seminary in Pasadena, California, and Houston, Texas.

Biographical information on the nominees is available at thenalc.org.



Alliyah Blakeley



James Caldwell



Judson Merrell



Mark Metze



Alan Peacock

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The Court of Adjudication hears appeals from disciplinary decisions and resolves questions of interpretation of NALC governing documents.

The Nominating Committee has published biographical information on the nominees to meet the constitutional requirement to distribute this information to NALC members prior to the convocation. The biographical information is available at thenalc.org.

No additional nominations are possible.

INTRODUCING MADDIE BENSON, NALC DIRECTOR OF DEVELOPMENT

At the beginning of March, I joined the NALC staff as director of development. It is an honor to be serving our denomination in this role. My responsibility as director of development is to develop and implement a fundraising strategy for the denomination.

I am approaching this role with a unique perspective. I worked for the NALC in different positions from 2016 to 2021. Over those five years, I got to know the NALC well—our people and our purpose.

Since leaving the NALC in 2021, I started a production company with my husband and worked on a master's in public administration through the University of Colorado Denver. While I was away, I watched as the NALC continued to grow in numbers and in ministry.

As director of development for the NALC, I'm committed to cultivating support for the work God is doing through us. I'll be highlighting opportunities for individuals, congregations, and other organizations to partner with the NALC. I'm looking forward to being a part of all that God is doing through the NALC—our congregations, our seminary, and all of our mission partners.



Maddie Benson

I would love to connect or reconnect with you. Please don't hesitate to reach out. I can be reached at mbenson@thenalc.org.

CONVOCATION

Maddie Benson, director of development will report on the impact of the NALC's 20/20 Vision and the fundraising appeal that is a part of the vision.

The Rev. Dr. Amy Little, general secretary, will be doing a presentation on safeguarding in youth and family ministry.

The Rev. Dr. Eric Riesen, president of the North American Lutheran Seminary, will provide devotions

for the convocation and report on the ministry of the seminary.

Registration fee for delegates is \$25. There is no charge for visitors.

To register, review reports or for more information on the convocation go to lutheranweek.com.

The convocation will be live streamed on Facebook to enable those who are not delegates to observe the meeting. There will be a link to the live stream at lutheranweek.com.

RECENT ORDINATIONS



Pastor Candice Carter was ordained on May 19 at Trinity Lutheran Church in Landis, North Carolina, where she serves a pastor.



Luke Beaver was ordained on July 13 at Shepherd of the Woods Lutheran Church in Jacksonville, Florida, where he serves as associate pastor. He is also called to serve as a chaplain in the U.S. Army.



Pastor Craig Wheaton was ordained on May 24 at New Hope Lutheran Church in Foresthill, California, where he serves as pastor.

LET'S KEEP IN TOUCH

Rev. Dr. David J. Baer, *editor*
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NORTH AMERICAN
LUTHERAN
CHURCH

Please copy and share this newsletter widely.

NALC YOUTH GATHERING

By Pastor Teresa Peters
Director of Youth and Family Ministry

Three hundred youth and leaders gathered July 1-4 in Boerne, Texas, for the first-ever NALC Continental Youth Gathering (CYG) around the theme “We Belong.”

Monday morning began with registration and worship with a message from Pastor Rob Weber, associate pastor of St. John Lutheran Church in Boerne, Texas, the congregation hosting the gathering.

Then we continued with icebreakers, a chance for youth from across North America to meet and begin to get to know each other. In the afternoon Bishop Dan Selbo spoke about how *We Belong*, highlighting Jesus as our good shepherd from John 10:14-15.

Monday evening was spent at the Tejas Rodeo where youth had an opportunity to line dance, learn to rope, play cornhole, and watch a real rodeo.



Tuesday and Wednesday mornings were spent doing mission work. The projects included packing lunches for Boerne’s first responders, packing for NALC Disaster Relief, working with children, doing clean up and small home repairs in a low-income neighborhood, as well as shopping for and volunteering at a pregnancy care facility.



Throughout the week youth had the opportunity to hear from a number of different speakers, all of them unique with stories of their own with the hopes that someone would resonate with each and every youth present.

It was a blessing to hear from Pastor Paulette McHugh, a mission developer from West Columbia, South Carolina; Pastor Bert Eldredge, pastor of Prince of Peace Lutheran Church in Casper, Wyoming;

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Pastor Darcy Albers, pastor of St. Albert Evangelical Lutheran Church in St. Albert, Alberta; Pastor Jay Lutz, pastor of Trinity Evangelical Lutheran Church in Ponoka, Alberta; Pastor Jeff Morlock, director of vocational discernment for the North American Lutheran Seminary; Pastor Michael Wikstrom, a retired U.S. Army chaplain and expert in suicide prevention; and Michelle Bauman, director of Lutherans for Life Y4Life.

During our large group sessions, participants lifted their voices together in song led by The Lurvey Brothers and our theme songwriter, Cole Peters. Our theme song “We Belong” is available to be used in all NALC congregations.

Those at the CYG couldn't help but notice the “yellow shirts.” Yellow shirts were worn by the CYG leadership, the majority being our Leaders in Training (LIT)—10 LITs, young adults from across North America who came together to share their faith, energy, gifts and talents with all in attendance.



Bishop Dan Selbo speaking at the youth gathering.

Our LITs, who will now be known as YALLs (Young Adult Lutheran Leaders), were absolutely amazing and a blessing to the CYG.

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Participants in the 2024 NALC Continental Youth Gathering posed for a group photo.



Youth met in small groups for Bible study.

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If there are young adults in your congregation who will be 18-26, encourage them to apply to be a YALL at the CYG in 2026.

An important part of our week was spent studying God's Word together. Youth were divided into small groups by age and gender and worked on a Bible Study written by Pastor Amy Little. If you would like a copy of this Bible Study, please contact Pastor Teresa Peters tpeters@thenalc.org.

Friday evening we gathered in Boerne City Park to watch fireworks celebrating U.S. Independence Day.

We then returned to St. John for a traditional late-night worship service that even included a baptism.



The service was led by Pastor Amy Little and the sermon was delivered by Pastor Eric Waters, senior pastor of St. John Lutheran Church in Boerne, Texas.

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Youth gathering participants prepared flood buckets for NALC Disaster Response.



Leaders and leaders in training posed with Bishop Dan and Mary Selbo.

NALC ONLINE CONFIRMATION

By Pastor Teresa Peters
Director of Youth and Family Ministry

One of the fun and successful youth ministries we have begun is our online confirmation program. We learned that we have a good number of small congregations and congregations without pastors, or congregations that only have one or two confirmation-age students that are having a difficult time offering confirmation.

Two years ago we began an online program. Classes meet for two years (during the school year) to thoroughly cover the Bible and the Small Catechism. In addition, the students are required to work with a mentor in their congregation and serve in their congregation. The program began with seven students in the first year and grew to 35 last year.

We will resume our online classes for our returning students in September. In addition, we will also be starting a new class for beginning students in September. We are planning on offering the first-year class on Monday evenings, and perhaps a second class on Tuesday evenings if the need dictates.

Please start thinking if this program would be helpful for your congregation. We would also like for new students to register by the end of August.



If you have questions or would like more information about the program, please contact Pastor Teresa Peters at tpeters@thenalc.org or Pastor Mark Braaten at mbraaten@thenalc.org.

We have found it most helpful to have a team of pastors sharing in the teaching of this. If you are a pastor or youth leader and would like to be part of one of the teams, please let Pastor Teresa or Pastor Mark know.

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The Holy Spirit was felt, and participants took the light from the Paschal Candle outside for prayer time together at the conclusion of the service.



A big thank you to St. John Lutheran Church and all who helped make our first Continental Youth Gathering a success.

Mark your calendars and join us July 7-10, 2026, for the next NALC Continental Youth Gathering.

Live stream recordings and photos from the youth gathering are available at cyg.thenalc.org.

SCHWARZ NAMED INTERIM TREASURER

Ryan Schwarz of Washington, D.C., has been named interim treasurer of the North American Lutheran Church. Schwarz served as treasurer for the first 10 years of the church body.

Michael Johnson of Sedona, Arizona, is unable to continue as NALC treasurer because of a serious accident several weeks ago. He has served as treasurer since 2020.

The NALC treasurer is appointed by the Executive Council. The NALC constitution stipulates that in the case of a vacancy in the office of treasurer, the Executive Council appoints an interim treasurer. A new treasurer will take office on Oct. 1 for a four-year term.

The North American Lutheran Church is looking for a qualified candidate for the role of treasurer. The treasurer of the NALC serves as the chief financial officer, responsible for overseeing all financial matters of the church. This is a voluntary position. The treasurer works closely with an NALC staff person, who serves as the assistant treasurer, and the general secretary to manage



Michael Johnson



Ryan Schwarz

the day-to-day financial operations of the NALC.

Those who are interested in learning more about the position, are encouraged to contact the Rev. Dr. Amy Little, general secretary, at alittle@thenalc.org.

ONLINE CLASS ON REVELATION

The North American Lutheran Seminary (NALS) will offer an online adult education class on Revelation this October. The class is entitled “Engaging Revelation.” The class will meet at 7 p.m. ET on Thursdays.

Last October the seminary offered a class on Revelation; this class will continue the study. You do not have to have attended the first class to join this one. New participants are most welcome.

The class will be taught by the Rev. Dr. Mark Braaten, Southern Area assistant to the bishop for the NALC. Pastor Braaten’s Doctor of Ministry degree is in Revelation studies. He has taught on the book of Revelation for 30 years. He is the author of two books on Revelation, *Come Lord Jesus: A Study of Revelation* and *Engaging Revelation*.

This class will look at four topics in Revelation. The class will read the biblical texts, look at what the texts said in their original context, and explore what they say to us today.

Here is the schedule:

Oct. 3—The Dragon, Beast, 666, Revelation 12 and 13.

Oct. 10—Why I Don’t like the Theory of a Rapture.

Oct. 17—Armageddon, Revelation 16 and 19.

Oct. 24—New Jerusalem, Revelation 21 and 22.



Mark Braaten

For more information or to register for the class go to thenals.org.

NALC DISASTER RESPONSE UPDATE

NALC Disaster Response has responded to severe tornado outbreaks and other disasters in 11 states over the last the year.

From the Clarksville, Tennessee, tornado on Dec. 10, 2023, to the wildfires in Maui and Texas to the tornadoes spawned across the Great Plains and Florida, NALC volunteers and congregations are supporting their local communities during the recovery.

Disaster response mission trips are currently scheduled for work in Ohio, California, Florida, Texas, Nebraska, and Iowa.

NALC Disaster Response has emptied 11 of the 15 regional warehouses during the spring storms. Your prayers and support are needed. It has been a devastating spring.

To schedule a volunteer team or mission trip or to schedule a “Stuff the Truck” event to help restock your area warehouse, contact Mary Bates, NALC Disaster Response coordinator at 740-509-1132 or disasterresponse@thenalc.org.



NALC Disaster Response volunteers i n Minden, Iowa

Flood buckets, disaster response kits and supplies should go to your area disaster warehouse. Gift cards and physical supplies may be sent to: NALC Disaster Response, 16500 Noble Ave., Caldwell, Ohio 43724.

Monetary donations may be made online at thenalc.org/giving or mailed to: NALC; PO Box 860565; Minneapolis, MN 55486-0565. Please note NALC Disaster Response on the memo line.



Damage caused by wi ldfires in California



Damage caused by tornado i n Minden, Iowa

DAGAGA GEMACHU, NALC GLOBAL WORKER IN KENYA

The Rev. Dagaga Gemachu, his wife Bruktawit and their four-year-old son Naga live in Nairobi, Kenya. Originally from Ethiopia, Pastor Dagaga is a global worker for the NALC and Awakening Lives to World Missions.

He is lead pastor of Oromo Christian Fellowship in Nairobi, serving in Word and Sacrament ministry as the only ordained pastor on staff. This church is engaging in fruitful, frontline ministry with Ethiopian refugees in Nairobi waiting to emigrate around the world, as well as with the unreached among the Borana people.

The Oromo Christian Fellowship Church in Nairobi (OCFN) was started as a home prayer group by some Ethiopian refugees residing in Kenya in the mid to late 1980s. No one imagined it would last 30-plus



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years, let alone that it was destined to do such a substantial mission work in the kingdom of God.

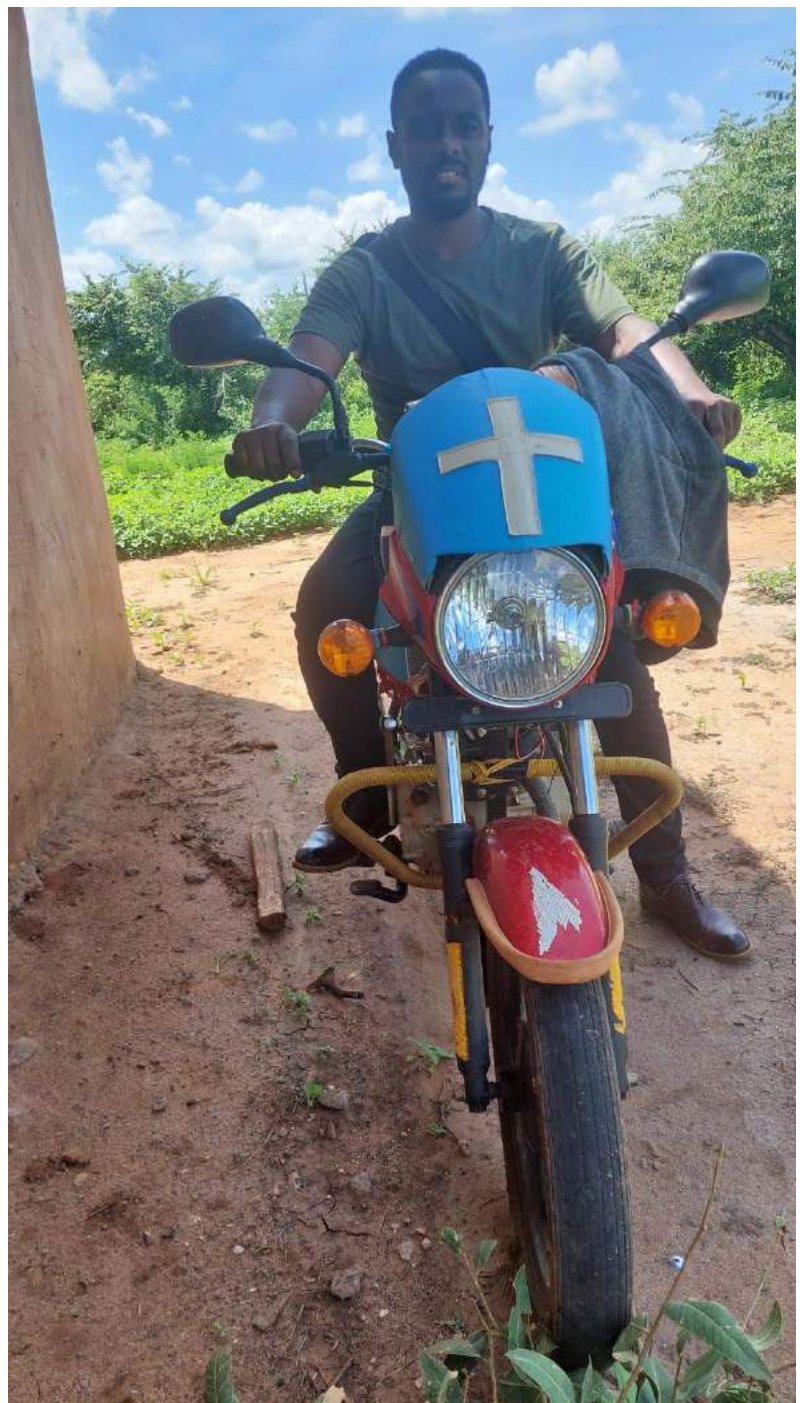
The plight of Oromo refugees from the tyranny and dictatorship of the Ethiopian governments in the last 30-plus years continued, and there was a constant increase in the flow of immigrants into neighboring Kenya. This little church has grown mightily over the years, with solid ministry in the city and beyond.

The Rev. Dr. Gemechis Buba, NALC assistant to the bishop for international mission, visited OCFN in 2022, which began the connection with the NALC. He found the congregation to be struggling for lack of a spiritual leader, and in need of mission leader to be stationed in Nairobi and do Word and Sacrament ministry with this rapidly growing number of Oromo immigrants to Nairobi, Kenya, and other parts of Kenya.

Dr. Buba wrote: “That congregation in Nairobi is doing a phenomenal work in spreading the Word of God among the Borana community in the northern part of Kenya, where that community has been unreached by the gospel for many years. Now having Dagaga as a missionary in Nairobi is going to help the congregation in Nairobi plus their immensely impressive mission expansion work in the northern part of Kenya.”

The immigrant population in Nairobi is often headed elsewhere in Europe or North America after a season of time, so as Pastor Dagaga and his team share the Gospel and make disciples, the impact of OCFN ministry extends around the world.

In addition, they have a powerful ministry among the Borena people in Northern Kenya, nomadic peoples largely unreached with the Gospel. There are 11 preaching points that Pastor Dagaga and his team visit regularly. In early 2024, there were 152 baptized during an outreach, with another 51 people who were inaccessible due to torrential rains waiting for the next ministry team to come.



For more information about how to partner with them in prayer and support, visit alwm.org/kenya.

There is a short introduction from Pastor Dagaga on [YouTube](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=...). In addition, there is a 51 minute conversation with Bishop Selbo; Dure Negassa, OCFN founder; the Rev. Carol Fryer, NALC director of missions; and the Rev. Gemachu that is perfect for home fellowships and adult Sunday school, or to share with your congregation for their home viewing on [YouTube](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=...).

BONHOEFFER HOUSE TO PROVIDE HOUSING FOR NALS STUDENTS

The North American Lutheran Seminary (NALs) has purchased a historic property at the NALS Seminary Center on the campus of Trinity Anglican Seminary in Ambridge, Pennsylvania.

The Bonhoeffer House will house NALS students and will be a center for formation for the NALS. This milestone comes as the NALS celebrates its 10th anniversary, marking a decade of growth and commitment to theological education.



The house features three student apartments and communal spaces designed for prayer, fellowship, and study. The property, originally built in 1827 by the Harmonist Society, has been restored to blend its historic charm with modern amenities, creating an ideal environment for theological formation.

The Bonhoeffer House, named after Lutheran pastor and theologian Dietrich Bonhoeffer (1906-1945), will be dedicated to fostering a vibrant academic and formative community, in keeping with Bonhoeffer's vision of "Life Together," as explained in his book of the same name.



The Rev. Dr. Eric M. Riesen, president of the NALS, highlighted the growing student body at NALS, particularly at the Seminary Center: "We are experiencing unprecedented growth, with more students than ever before. This house will provide our students with a unique opportunity to live out Bonhoeffer's vision of life together, fostering friendships and spiritual growth in an ecumenical setting."

The purchase of the property is made possible through gifts given to the

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North American Lutheran Church 20/20 Vision Initiative, in which a key element of the vision is raising up pastors and leaders who embody the Core Values of the NALC.

Over the summer the NALS will be furnishing the Bonhoeffer House. Please consider investing in this future by making a gift earmarked for the Bonhoeffer House through the NALC's 20/20 Vision Initiative.

You may support the Bonhoeffer House and learn more about the 20/20 Vision at vision.thenalc.org.

Gifts can be mailed to North American Lutheran Church, PO Box 860565, Minneapolis, MN 55486-0565. The check should be payable to the NALC with "20/20 Vision—Bonhoeffer House" on the memo line.

The NALS Network includes the Seminary Center at Trinity Anglican Seminary in Ambridge, Pennsylvania; and partner seminaries Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary in Charlotte, North Carolina; Beeson Divinity School in Birmingham, Alabama; Concordia Lutheran Seminary in Edmonton, Alberta; and Fuller Theological Seminary in Pasadena, California, and Houston, Texas.

You can learn more about the North American Lutheran Seminary at thenals.org.



NORTH AMERICAN
LUTHERAN
SEMINARY



A PASTORAL CALL TO REJECT VIOLENCE AND PURSUE PEACE

A LETTER FROM BISHOP DAN SELBO REGARDING THE ASSASSINATION ATTEMPT ON FORMER PRESIDENT DONALD TRUMP

Dear Clergy, Congregations, and Partners in Ministry:

In the wake of recent events surrounding the assassination attempt on former President Donald Trump during a campaign rally, our hearts are heavy with sorrow and concern for the safety and well-being of our nation. This act of violence marks yet another instance of profound national distress, adding to the series of events that have deeply scarred our national consciousness.

The North American Lutheran Church unequivocally condemns all acts of violence, hatred, and political extremism. We expect our congregations and clergy to stand firmly against such actions. We recognize that such acts are a manifestation of deep-seated divisions and tensions within our society, and we are called, as followers of Christ, to stand against them with a message of peace, justice, and reconciliation grounded in the Gospel.

In these trying times, it is crucial for us to turn to our faith and seek God's guidance and strength. Let us join together in prayer, lifting up our nation and all its leaders, that they may be guided by wisdom and a spirit of unity. Let us pray for the families of those who have suffered loss and injury, and for all who live in fear and uncertainty.

Call to Prayer

First, as we gather in our congregations, let us be steadfast in prayer for former President Trump, his staff, and his family, as well as for the families of those who have been affected by this violent attack—especially families of those who were killed or wounded. It is equally important that we earnestly pray for President Biden and all other



FROM THE BISHOP

REV. DR. DAN SELBO
BISHOP

candidates for office at every level of our government. Our prayers are needed to uphold their safety and well-being during these tumultuous times.

Secondly, let us embody the love of Christ in our interactions with others, especially during this season of political tension. Jesus calls us to love our neighbors and even our enemies, and His Gospel proclamation urges us to act as peacemakers and agents of reconciliation. As His disciples, we are called to reflect Christ's love and peace in our communities, fostering dialogue and understanding amidst our differences.

Finally, we must hold onto hope, knowing that God is sovereign over all things. Though we may not understand the events unfolding around us, we can trust in God's plan and His promise to hold all things together. As the Psalmist declares, "In his hand are the caverns of the earth; the heights of the hills are also his" (Psalm 95:4-5). Let this assurance strengthen our faith and resolve. We are reminded of the promise given to us in Baptism, that we are united with Christ in His death and resurrection, and that nothing can separate us from His love.

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A Call for Unity and Peace

The U. S. Conference of Catholic Bishops recently emphasized the need for all people of goodwill to join in prayer for peace in our country, stating that political violence is never a solution to disagreements. We echo their call to “pursue what leads to peace and building up one another” (Romans 14:19) through dialogue and seeking justice. This aligns with our commitment to reject all forms of violence and to work toward reconciliation and understanding.

In this spirit, I commend the following prayers for your use, individually, as families, and in your congregations, as we seek God’s peace and guidance:

Prayers for our nation from the *Lutheran Book of Worship*

+ Lord God, you taught the hearts of your faithful people by sending them the light of your Holy Spirit. Grant that we, by your Spirit, may have a right judgment in all things and evermore rejoice in his holy counsel; through your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

+ Grant, O God, that your holy and life-giving Spirit may move every human heart, that the barriers which divide us may crumble, suspicions disappear, and hatreds cease, and that, with our divisions healed, we might live in justice and peace; through your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

+ Lord God, accept our humble confession of the wrongs we have done, the injustice to which we have been party, and the countless denials of your mercy we have expressed. Turn us toward the love offered in your Son, and cleanse us by your grace; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

+ O Lord our governor, your glory shines throughout the world. We commend our nation to your merciful care, that we may live securely in peace and may be guided by your providence. Give all in authority the wisdom and strength to know your will and to do it. Help them remember that they are called to serve the people as lovers of truth and justice; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

+ Almighty God, you have given us this good land as our heritage. Make us always remember your generosity and constantly do your will. Bless our land with honest industry, truthful education, and an honorable way of life. Save us from violence, discord, and confusion; from pride and arrogance, and from every evil course of action. Make us who came from many nations with many different languages a united people. Defend our liberties and give those whom we have entrusted with the authority of government the spirit of wisdom, that there might be justice and peace in our land. When times are prosperous, let our hearts be thankful; and, in troubled times, do not let our trust in you fail. We ask this through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

+ O most loving Father, you want us to give thanks for all things, to fear nothing except losing you, and to lay all our cares on you, knowing that you care for us. Protect us from faithless fears and worldly anxieties, and grant that no clouds in this mortal life may hide from us the light of your immortal love shown to us in your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

+ Watch, dear Lord, with those who wake or watch or weep, and give your angels charge over those who sleep. Tend the sick, rest the weary, bless the dying, soothe the suffering, pity the afflicted, shield the joyous. In your love, give us all this, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

+ Lord, have mercy upon us. Christ, have mercy upon us. Lord, have mercy upon us.

In Christ’s service,

The Rev. Dr. Daniel W. Selbo
Bishop, North American Lutheran Church



TRIP TO TUMAINI LUTHERAN PARISH IN BARIADI, TANZANIA

By Pastor Shelly Schultz

We were overwhelmed with the warm welcome and hospitality shown to us upon our arrival at the Tumaini Lutheran Parish, each of us receiving warm embraces and a bouquet of roses.

Fourteen individuals recently returned from a mission trip to Bariadi, Tanzania, we were warmly welcomed to join in the ministry at the Tumaini Parish that is partnered with Grace Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jackson Center, Ohio; St. John's Lutheran Church in Greenville, Ohio, and One Plus God Ministries. One Plus God Ministries, an NALC Ministry Partner, organized and led the mission trip. Eight individuals from Grace attended, two from St. John's, and four from One Plus God Ministries.

For the past 15 years, many congregations in the Ohio Mission Region have been sponsoring orphans at Home of Peace orphanage on the campus of the Tumaini Parish, providing for their primary and secondary Lutheran education.

Two years ago, the ministry expanded to include an evangelist, Ndumeishi Nkya, and a social worker, Tunsubilege Philemon, now recognized as NALC global workers. They have planted three new churches in the more remote villages near Bariadi.

The ministry that is happening by God's design is incredible, and we were honored to take part in the ministry that they have begun and continue for the Church of Jesus Christ. We were with them June 1-9, while we were there we partnered with their church leaders to bring the Gospel of Jesus in tangible ways to the people of the villages of Bariadi, Mbiti, Sakwe, and Ibulyu. We were blessed by their hospitality and partnership in the Gospel. In every way our hosts shared with the Lord's people who are in need, practicing hospitality (Romans 12:13).



NALC global workers evangelist Ndumeishi Nkya and social worker Tunsubilege Philemon.

Worship was incredible—a traditional sung Lutheran Holy Communion liturgy surrounded by praise music and dancing to get our hearts and minds ready to hear the Word of God. Our own impromptu choir sang two worship songs, “Ten Thousand Reasons” and “These are the Days of Elijah.” We sang “Faith of Our Fathers” in each service following the confession of the Apostles’ Creed is followed each worship with the singing of “Faith of Our Fathers.” We also sang “How Great Thou Art,” “What a Friend We Have in Jesus” and “Mine Eyes Have Seen the Glory.” Worshipers sang each song in their own language.

Every worship service that was led by an ordained pastor included an invitation to be baptized into Christ. Each person who came forward to be baptized, took on a Biblical name which was recorded, and was welcomed. No less than 15 baptisms occurred at each worship service we attended. Every worship service had an

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invitation to become a member of the congregation. They each came forward and were blessed, received, and welcomed.

The Tumaini Lutheran Parish in Bariadi, Tanzania, takes Jesus' command literally to baptize in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit and to teach all that the Lord has commanded. In our door-to-door evangelism visits in the villages of Mbiti, Sakwe, and Ibulyu, each team, consisting of a pastor, evangelist, translator, and Christ's disciples, shared the Word of God for that family, an interpretation for that particular family, and then an invitation to be baptized into the life of Christ. The pastor baptized and the evangelist recorded the names of each individual. No fewer than four dozen were baptized that day.

On Tuesday in the village of Mbiti, the Rev. Dr. Yohana Nzelu, the bishop of the Southeast Lake Victoria Diocese of the Evangelical Lutheran Church



Dedication of the new church in the village of Mbiti.



Bishop Yohana Nzelu presiding at the dedication of the new church in the village of Mbiti.

in Tanzania, presided at the dedication of the newly-built church in that village.

At that worship 19 people were baptized into the Church of Christ. For the past two years, Ndumeishi and Tunsubilege have been visiting the homes and families in the village of Mbiti. They have shared the love of Jesus that is palpable in these families. The new church was overflowing with people and praise to the Lord.

We thank Trinity Lutheran Church in Ashland, Ohio, for their generous grant to assist in the building of that church.

Later that week, Tunsubilege hosted a training day in Mbiti in which Bill, Abby, Darrell, Kim, and Tammy delivered presentations on first aid, parenting, teenage life, and the prevention of AIDS. The four

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young adults on the mission trip, Macy, Gabrielle, Grace, and Hans presented Bible stories to 300 children in the church sanctuary.

Education is a need in the villages. At the Home of Peace Orphanage, 24 youth were educated at the Lutheran primary and secondary schools. The hope of our NALC global workers, Ndumeishi and Tunsubilege, is to build and provide a nursery school in each village to teach the many children the basics of the Christian faith and the value of a basic education.

Baptizing and teaching is not done without service in each of these villages. Faith in Jesus produces gifts to those in need as James writes, "What good is it, my brothers and sisters, if someone claims to have faith but has no deeds? Can such faith save them? Suppose a brother or a sister is without clothes and daily food. If one of you says to them, "Go in peace; keep warm and well fed," but does nothing about their physical needs, what good is it? In the same way, faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead" (James 2:14-17).

Highlights of the week included delivering and showing the "Jesus" movie in the village of Ibulyu and having 150 people come forward for the laying on of hands, prayer, and to receive Christ Jesus as their Lord and Savior.

During the week, we also individually blessed 10 pairs of goats that were given to families in which there was great need because of handicap or widowhood. Food packages, consisting of cooking oil, sugar, salt, ground peanuts, soap, and a solar-powered lantern, were distributed to families in need with a Word of God and a prayer.

It was amazing to witness the rich work of the Lord in Bariadi and the surrounding villages as their workers in the Kingdom continually baptize and teach. The Church of Christ is growing at a great rate, and there are not enough pastors to be in each congregation. So they have structured their smaller congregations as worship centers in which an evangelist leads weekly worship and Bible study. The evangelists are trained in worship leadership,



Blessing of goat pairs

Bible interpretation, and preaching at training centers in the diocese. The pastor leads worship once or twice a month in these smaller congregations to bring Baptism and Holy Communion to the people.

In each of the villages of Mbiti, Sakwe, and Ibulyu there is an assistant evangelist also trained in worship leadership, Bible study, and preaching so that more people may be reached with the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

Global mission trips inspire local mission. We would encourage you each to choose a global mission with which to partner to strengthen your congregation's own understanding of building the Church of Jesus in your local area. The NALC has many opportunities to partner with a global mission. You can partner with the Home of Peace Orphanage or Village Evangelism Project in Bariadi, Tanzania through Grace Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jackson Center, Ohio.

We thank Wynand DeWet, director of One Plus God Ministries, for his wisdom and organization to make this mission trip possible. He offers many other global mission trips if you are interested.

A DIFFERENT APPROACH TO PRO-LIFE MINISTRY

By Pastor Patrick Darnell

As a pastor, I sometimes have the opportunity to take on unexpected ministries outside of the church. Such was the case when I was invited to become the executive director of Operation Saving Life (OSL), a Christian pro-life organization focused on ending abortion by providing for the spiritual, physical, and financial needs of women who have had an unplanned pregnancy. After many years, and hundreds of lives being saved, our ministry is drawing to a close at the end of this month as we merge with one of our national partners. As I reflect on my brief time with this organization, I'm struck at just how little I understood of this ministry from my days in the pulpit. Following are a few of the lessons that I have learned in ministering to abortion-minded women in crisis.

Start With Compassion

Churches often address the problem of abortion—and abortion minded women—in the wrong way. We view the issue of abortion as a moral crisis—which it is. After all, life begins at conception and to end that life is a terrible sin. Without realizing it, we frame the woman's decision to have an abortion through this same lens. We assume, as is often advertised as the “benefits” of an abortion, that the woman is making a choice for family planning reasons, because economic hardships, or perhaps so that she can reach a milestone in her career or education. As the Church, our response is often to try and help this woman see the moral wrong of this decision so that she might choose life, because this is the right decision, even though it is the harder one to make.

In reality, 75 percent of all women who have had an abortion report that they were forced into the

procedure. Nearly every woman in our program at Operation Saving Life was a victim of domestic violence, risked losing her job or home by having another child, faced extreme poverty, or had family or partners who were demanding that she have the procedure. It is a reality that those in the abortion industry don't often share because you can't be pro-choice if you don't have the freedom to choose in the first place.

The issue of abortion for many of these mothers, then, doesn't focus on morals, but rather survival. This is how the Church must respond to the issue as well. While we should never shy away from calling abortion a sin, beginning our approach to saving a life with a moral argument will only condemn and lead a mother further from Christ.

More often than not, she knows that abortion is wrong—in fact, she doesn't want one—but does not see any other option out of her situation than to end the pregnancy. She is trying to survive and avoid hardship that she does not believe that she can bear.

The response of the Church must begin with compassion by responding to the barriers that she feels she has in bringing a child into this world. By showing her that there is a path to having this child and to thrive, we are giving her hope. In a very real way, our goal is to embody the words of Isaiah 40:3: “In the wilderness prepare the way for the LORD; make straight in the desert a highway for our God.”

We cannot begin our ministry to the abortion-minded mother in condemnation, but instead in hope, in understanding, and in a very clear response to the challenges that she faces. We make a path, when no path can be seen.

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Lead With Generosity

In our experience, the barriers that many of our mothers faced focused on just a few areas. At OSL, we found that if we could tailor our ministry to meet these needs, then the mother would most likely choose life. In fact, in our seven years, we have not had a single woman choose to abort her child after entering our program. Every one of them chose life. We didn't do anything radical. We simply listened and responded. Most importantly, we followed through.

While every situation is different, we found that the greatest and most common barriers that a mother had in choosing life included: housing, transportation, childcare, and community. If we could help a mother have safe and stable housing, provide the means to get to work or doctor's appointments, find adequate childcare, and surround her with people who would love and support her, we would also be providing hope and a clear path to choose life. Although paying rent or buying a car can be very big asks, especially for smaller churches, there are still ways that any congregation can help accomplish these goals.

One of the most successful ministries that we had was our mentor mom program. It cost nothing, required no space, and was easy for us to scale with our needs. Many of the mothers in our program were facing parenthood alone. Their families or the father were not supportive, and these mothers often were first-time and single parents. What they needed most were people who could surround them and let them know that they didn't have to face this alone.

In partnership with local churches, we paired the women in our program with experienced mothers in congregations. These mentor moms would check in on our moms regularly, befriend them, pray with them, help them when a mom was overwhelmed, worried, or just needed someone there. Ministry happens when we experience life alongside others, and this was ministry in its purest form—simply loving one's neighbor in the name of Christ. No money was ever exchanged, simply fellowship and support.

Some churches could help in much greater ways. They donated cars or raised funds for auto repairs. Others held gift card drives for Uber funds or Walmart cards so that a mom could get diapers or make it to doctors' appointments. Some hosted weekly support groups and Bible studies for single moms. Women's groups across the city hosted baby showers, threw birthday parties, or provided Christmas presents. A few churches paid for childcare, offered work or job placement help, and paid for temporary housing. One even offered an unused parsonage as safe housing for pregnant moms.

Generosity can come in many forms. The key is to always look for and respond to the barriers that these women are facing. Hope is easy to find when a path is made clear. As a ministry, our job is to bring light into the darkest of places. Even the dimmest light completely changes our perspective of the situation we are in. If a church can accomplish this, then they can help save a life.

Continuing The Relationship

Perhaps the most disheartening thing we find is that many ministry efforts are far too short. All of our churches will offer occasional help and prayer, but what these mothers need is a long-term investment. Sadly, most pro-life ministries stop once a woman has chosen to keep her child. Many pregnancy care centers, too, can only offer support for up to a year, and this support is limited.

Yet, consider all that these women have been through. In just a few months, they have become parents. They are over tired and over worked. Many have been abandoned by their boyfriends or husbands. Some have lost their jobs. Others are struggling to keep up with the costs of childcare. A few are rebuilding their lives after situations of abuse, while others are simply trying to pick up the pieces. It is not uncommon for us to find that God has used a child to save the life of a mother, but the mother still desperately needs support.

This is the greatest ministry opportunity that the Church has—offering ongoing support. In this

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ministry, we have to go big and go long. At OS�, a mother could remain part of our program for up to three years after a child was born. Our commitment to help wasn't limited to one-time support because our goal was to develop a long-term relationship with the mother. Like the Church, we are in the business of saving lives *and* changing lives. This takes time. So, rather than doing something once, we would do it for an entire quarter. Need help with an electric bill this month? We will pay it for the entire summer. Need help with rent, with food, with daycare ... we've got this, but not just once. That's 90 days on us, so that you can be free to focus on what you need to be well.

The twist is that we did not do this simply out of generosity, but for the purpose of longevity. We reevaluated our commitments every 90 days, but during that time, we regularly met with the moms. We prayed with them, offered pastoral care, helped them to set goals, and worked with them to achieve them. So long as they were working to get on their feet and parent well, we would be with them the entire way. They should never have to face this challenge alone. It was this kind of commitment that saved lives.

There is no reason for a church not to do the same thing. Most congregations could very easily adopt a mother or two in need and make the commitment to invest in that family and do so for the long term. Be open that you are doing this because this is the kind of thing that Christ calls us to do. There is no condemnation, but a clear truth of love, hope, and a future. While boundaries, goals, and expectations should be set, developing relationships with these families can make a generational impact in their lives. It is the best tool that we have to break the destructive cycles that so many in our community face.

Final Thoughts

Although the work of Operation Saving Life is ending, it is my prayer that our ministry will continue through the Church. There is nothing more powerful in these women's lives than what Christ can accomplish in them. Often, as is true in the Church itself, it was the unexpected child that changed everything for the better. Our job is to prepare the way.

Pastor Patrick Darnell is an NALC pastor living in Nashville, Tennessee, and a member of the NALC Life Ministries Team. This article is part of a series of articles from NALC Life Ministries.

YOUNG ADULT PEER MINISTRY GROUP TO BEGIN THIS FALL

Young adults from across the NALC are invited to join together on Zoom to study God's Word together and get to know each other better as disciples of Jesus Christ.

The online group will begin working through the *NALC Life-to-Life Discipleship Experience* manual and will grow from there.

If you are a young adult 18 to 30 come and join us, or if there is someone in your congregation encourage them to take part.

The group's first meeting is at 8 p.m. ET on Sunday, Sept. 22.

You can learn more about the NALC Life-to-Life Discipleship process at nalclifetolife.org.

For more information go to thenalc.org or contact Pastor Teresa Peters, NALC director of Youth and Family Ministry, at tpeters@thenalc.org.

[Click here to join the Zoom meeting.](#)

FEEDING PEOPLE WITH BOTH HANDS

INSTALLATION OF PASTOR ESTEBAN SALAZAR

*By Pastor Carol Fryer
Director of Missions*

It was such a blessing to visit our new NALC Spanish mission, Iglesia Luterana San Juan Bautista (SJB), and their host congregation, Bethel Lutheran Church (BLC), in Santa Maria, California.

I arrived at the church on Thursday afternoon, June 20, where leaders of Bethel Lutheran were gathered to welcome me and tell me about the relationship that has developed between the two congregations—English speaking and Spanish speaking. Among those leaders were the Rev. Jeff Nellermoe, his wife Mim, and the now retired pastor, the Rev. Carl Nielsen.

On Friday, we packed up food donations from a nearby Whole Foods Market and took them back to the church where some of the Mexican women and children were waiting to help. The food was sorted into bags to be given to the families of the SJB ministry. After about half of the bags of food were taken, we took the rest out to the strawberry



Pastors who took part in the installation service for Pastor Esteban Salazar as pastor of Iglesia Luterana San Juan Bautista in Santa Maria, California, posed for a group photo.

field where some of the men and women were working. Soon the back of the truck was empty, and all the food was gone.

The Mexican farm workers include people from the state of Oaxaca in Mexico. Because of the geography of that part of Mexico, the people of Oaxaca are mostly indigenous peoples who are isolated by rugged terrain from other parts of the country. The lack of economic development in Oaxaca has led to high levels of poverty resulting in the migration of many people to find employment. Some of them have come to work in the fields of California and are now a part of the ministry of Pastor Esteban and Angie Salazar and Iglesia Luterana San Juan Bautista.

When we went out to the strawberry field to distribute food to the workers, I saw many other similar fields with workers in them. So, I asked if there were other churches in the



Preparing food for distribution.

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area who had a similar ministry to feed others. The answer was: yes, but most of them do not serve the indigenous people from Oaxaca. Unfortunately, they are shunned by many of those churches. But Esteban and Angie Salazar welcome them with open arms.

In spending time with Pastor Esteban, I learned that he has a heart for this ministry. His deepest desire is to feed people in two ways. He holds up both hands and, looking at one hand, he says, “I want to feed them with the Word of God!” Then he indicates his other hand and says, “I want to feed their bodies with food!” And that is what the ministry of San Juan Bautista is all about.

I had the honor and privilege of preaching that Sunday. The Gospel text was the story of Jesus stilling the storm from Mark’s gospel. My theme was, “Stay in the boat!” The storms of life are many and yet, those who are baptized and belong in the boat, which is the Church, are not immune to those storms. Jesus is in the boat with us and his presence ensures us that we are safe. Even the storm of death cannot ultimately destroy us as long as we stay in the boat with Jesus—for he has defeated death once and for all!

Pastor Randy Ouimette, dean of the Southwest Pacific Mission District, installed Pastor Salazar and Pastor Marv Combs, Western Area assistant to the bishop, brought greetings from Bishop Dan Selbo and the NALC staff. Pastor Patricia Muran faithfully translated everything from English to Spanish.



Distributing food to farm workers.



San Juan Bautista congregation blessing Pastor Salazar.

Two services were held, one in English for BLC and one in Spanish for the SJB congregation. As Pastor Esteban was being installed the members of SJB all held up their hands in blessing. The church was filled to overflowing! There were people in the narthex, kneeling and praying. There were more outside the church building, trying to hear as best they could. Children were everywhere! It was a glorious sight to see!

After worship, the festivities began. Tons of food and drink had been prepared for the crowd; a brass band was playing; and then there were pinatas. It was a great celebration!

We give thanks to God for Pastor Esteban and Angie Salazar, for Pastor Jeff and Mim Nellerroe, for the people of Bethel Lutheran Church and Iglesia Luterana San Juan Bautista in Santa Maria, California. Please pray for this ministry, and, if possible, help support them as they feed others with both hands.

SEARCH FOR NALS PRESIDENT BEGINS

The North American Lutheran Seminary (NALS) Board of Regents has begun a search for a new seminary president.

The Rev. Dr. Eric M. Riesen will step down as NALS president in January. Pastor Riesen has served as NALS president since Feb. 1, 2020.

The seminary president is the chief executive officer of the NALS Network. The NALS Network includes the Seminary Center at Trinity Anglican Seminary in Ambridge, Pennsylvania; and partner seminaries Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary in Charlotte, North Carolina; Beeson Divinity School in Birmingham, Alabama; Concordia Lutheran Seminary in Edmonton, Alberta; and Fuller Theological Seminary in Pasadena, California, and Houston, Texas.

The president plays a pivotal role in providing spiritual, theological, academic, and organizational leadership to NALS seminarians, faculty, and staff, in direct alignment with the NALC's vision and mission.

The Board of Regents has named a seven-member search committee for the new president. Search committee members are:

+ The Rev. James T. Lehmann of Fithian, Illinois, a retired NALC pastor and current member of the NALS Board of Regents.

+ Julie Hartfelder, of New Albany, Ohio, a member of Grace Evangelical Lutheran Church in Westerville, Ohio, and a member of the NALC Executive Council.

+ The Rev. Dr. John W. Hoyum, pastor of Port Madison Lutheran Church on Bainbridge Island, Washington.

+ The Rev. Dr. Stéphane M. Kalonji, pastor of St. Paul Lutheran Church in Rosenberg, Texas, and a member of the NALS Board of Regents.

+ The Rev. Kenneth C. Kimball, pastor of Old East Paint Creek in Waterville, Iowa, and Old West Paint Creek Lutheran Church in Waukon, Iowa.

+ The Rev. Taylor M. (Rister) Stempniak, pastor of Immanuel Lutheran Church in Fresno, California, and a 2020 graduate of the NALS.

+ The Rev. Dr. Nathan Howard Yoder, an NALS faculty member and director of Lutheran Studies at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary in Charlotte, North Carolina.

The Board of Regents has announced the following qualifications for the new president:

+ Exemplifies a godly life under the Lordship of Jesus Christ.

+ Certified or willing to pursue certification as an ordained pastor in the NALC.

+ Holds a doctoral degree in a theological discipline or related field; a Ph.D. is preferred.

+ Has a minimum of three years of pastoral experience.

+ Has proven organizational leadership experience.

+ Exhibits leadership in the Lutheran Church beyond the parish level.

+ Demonstrates exceptional written and verbal communication skills.

+ Capable of engaging others with humility, integrity, compassion, resilience, and reliability.

+ Experience in leading strategic planning processes and their implementation.

+ Experience in fiscal and managerial practices, including donor relationships.

+ Willing to relocate near the Seminary Center in Ambridge, Pennsylvania.

You can learn more about the NALS and the presidential search process at thenals.org.

CRISTO REY LUTHERAN CHURCH

NEW MISSION START IN JOLIET, ILLINOIS

By Pastor Mark Braaten
Southern Area Assistant to the Bishop

I recently had the joy of worshipping with Cristo Rey Lutheran Church in Joliet, Illinois, and I'd like to share that joy with the NALC. We as the NALC are blessed with a new ministry with Hispanic people. It is Cristo Rey (Christ the King) Lutheran Church, they officially began a regular worship schedule on Epiphany (Jan. 6) of this year.

Pastor Keith Forni is working to develop this mission. They worship in the facilities of Messiah Lutheran Church, an LCMC congregation in Joliet.



Joliet, the third largest city in Illinois, has a large and growing Hispanic population. Pastor Forni has lead bi-lingual ministries in the Chicago area for many years. It is a most promising area for a mission start.

I was blessed to worship with Cristo Rey on Mothers' Day, May 12. I shared a word of welcome for the congregation, and lead a prayer of commissioning for Pastor Forni and the congregation. It was a joyful worship service.

Pastor Forni is absolutely amazing in switching between Spanish and English. The majority of the service was in Spanish as that is the primary language for most of the congregation. But there was more than enough English for a non-Spanish speaker like me to enjoy and participate in worship. There is excitement in the congregation, great fellowship, wonderful music, and a beautiful proclamation of the Gospel in Word and Sacrament.

Please keep Cristo Rey and Pastor Forni in your prayers. It is exciting to see the NALC's ministry among Spanish-speaking people grow and expand.

A special thank you to the congregations in the Great Rivers Mission District and beyond that are supporting this work!

May our Lord bless and guide this new ministry!

RAISING UP A NEW GENERATION OF PASTORS, CHURCH LEADERS

Future pastors and church leaders of the Lutheran Church met July 21-27 at Grand View University in Des Moines, Iowa, for the NEXUS Institute.

The NEXUS Institute is a week-long theology program 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.

Pastor Jeff Morlock, director of vocational discernment and recruitment for the North American Lutheran Seminary; Pastor Teresa Peters, director of Youth and Family Ministry for the NALC;



and other NALC pastors and seminarians joined young people from NALC congregations at NEXUS.

